Sanskrit Ki Jivanamulyaparaka Sabdavali

WORDS FOR HUMAN VALUES IN SANSKRIT

USHA SATYAVRAT

2002

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Preface

As a student of Sanskrit literature I had been impressed all through with the great store it laid on human values, their cultivation, their practice, their propagation. It has a number of words for them which not unoften spill over to a full cluster for a particular value-concept with each one of the component of that cluster focusing on a given shade or nuance of that concept. Sanskrit being no longer in use in every day speech, it is not easy to divine that shade or nuance. For long I had been wishing to 'break the shell of these words', to have a clear grasp of their connotation. Up to a little over two years back it had only been a pious wish with me. Then came the moment which provided me with the necessary push to translate this wish into a reality. The moment was my selection as a Senior Fellow by the Department of Culture, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt. of India. Under this Fellowship I took up the very work of the study of the Sanskrit words for human values which is very dear to me.

For comprehension of the concept behind the words I had to browse through a vast corpus of Sanskrit literature which threw up many an interesting and remarkable instance of the values the words would denote. The hard work, though strenuous, has turned out *pariṇāmaramaṇīya*, pleasant at the end, enabling me to dig up the expositions of the value-concepts as understood by ancient seers and thinkers and the way they were put in practice in India by

men of character over the years.

The very fact that the Indian civilization is one of the oldest of the civilizations of the world that is still thriving having withstood the ravages of time must necessarily prompt any serious student of it to trace the source of its resilience. There is no gainsaying the fact that that source lies in the values it has discovered and assiduously tried to foster. It is they which form its strong foundation on which it rests. Even with the large scale erosion on the emphasis on them in modern society with the turning of the wheel of Time, they still command general acceptance. And therein lies their intrinsic worth.

It needs to be mentioned here that the values the ancient thinkers propounded are not for Indian society only. They are for entire humanity with relevance for every segment of human society.

I place the result of my two years' of labour in the hands of readers. While doing so I place on record my deep gratitude to the Department of Culture, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt. of India which provided me with the opportunity to carry out the work.

I dedicate the present work to the cultivation and the better appreciation of human values in present day society.

10.12.2002. Usha Satyavrat

THE CONCEPT AND PRACTICE OF *SATYA* (TRUTH) IN SANSKRIT LITERATURE

Indian tradition has laid emphasis on *satya* or truth since times immemorial. Preparatory to his pupil returning to his home to take up the duties of a householder on completion of his period of Vedic education, his teacher gave him parting advice. We have a specimen of it in the *Taittirīyopaniṣad.* This is the first available indication of what can be described in modern terminology as the Convocation Address. The very first piece of advice that the teacher gives his pupil is that he should speak the truth: *satyaṁ vada.*[1] Enumerating the things that he should not neglect while continuing with his advice, he mentions truth: *satyān na pramaditavyam,*[2] let there be no neglect of truth. The Upaniṣadic seers know it full well that it is very difficult to keep to truth. The glitter of gold is far too distracting to turn a person away from it: *hiraṇmayena pātreṇa satyasyāpihitaṁ mukham,*[3] the face of truth is covered with a golden disc.[4] They implore the Lord to unveil it for them so that they, who love truth, may see it: *tan me Pūṣann apāvṛṇu satyadharmāya dṛṣṭaye.*[5]

The *Vājasaneyi Saṁhitā* declares that it is truth alone that triumphs, *satyam eva jayati*[6] and that it is through *satya* that the path that leads to divinity opens up. *Satyena panthā vitato devayānaḥ.*[7]

The *Yagñavalkyasmṛti*[8] includes *satya* among the ten *yamas* or great moral and religious observances the constant practice of which is a must, as says Manu: *yamān seveta satatam*.[9]

A stanza in the *Rāmāyaṇa* assigns to *satya* or truth a place higher than even a thousand Aśvamedhas, horse sacrifices:

aśvamedhasaharaṁ ca satyaṁ ca tulayā dhṛtam
Aśvamedhasahasrād dhi satyam eva viśiṣyate[10]

"If a thousand Aśvamedhas and *satya,* truth were to be put in the scale, *satya* would weigh heavier than the thousand Aśvamedhas". Aśvamedha is that sacrifice which is described in the scriptures as the king of sacrifices, *kraturāṭ* and the remover of all sins: *sarvapāpapraṇodanaḥ*. If this is the situation with one Aśvamedha, how much more would it be with a thousand of them? Truth is said to transcend even the thousand.

It is not surprising that the stanza should occur in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. The work is a saga of the upholding of truth. Daśaratha had promised two boons to Kaikeyī who had asked for them at the crucial moment when he had already announced the coronation of Rāma.The boons asked were the coronation of Bharata in place of Rāma and the exile of the latter to a forest for fourteen years. Though he had promised the boons, Daśaratha did not have the heart to grant them when asked for, when face to face with Rāma. He did not say anything, *anukto 'pyatrabhavatā*;[11] he just kept mum. It was Kaikeyī who conveyed to him everything. It did not take long for Rāma to get

into the intricacy of the situation. He decided without even a second thought to save the truth for his father; that was what Kaikeyī also had told him, *satyena mahatā Rāma tārayasva nareśvaram*,[12] and volunteered to relinquish the throne and repair to forest. His father had not told him to do anything of the kind. There was no question of any disobedience to him, therefore. As a matter of fact, he had resisted all the pleading and persuation of Lakṣmaṇa and Kausalyā; the latter even going to the extent of saying that her position as mother was superior to that of the father and that she orders him not to do anything of the kind that Kaikeyī wants him to. Rāma knew that his father had promised two boons and that he had to keep his promise. Otherwise he would be untruthful. He did not want that stigma to attach to him. He had to uphold the truth, he being described to Nārada by Vālmīki as another Dharmarāja as far a truth was concerned.

There is no better *tapas*, austerity, than *satya* truth, *nāsti satyāt paraṁ tapaḥ*,[13] says Cāṇakya. It is easy to preach but extremely difficult to practise it. Even Yudhiṣṭhira who had earned the exalted title of Dharmarāja on account of his adherence to truth and righteousness faltered once in its practice by permitting himself the equivocal statement *Aśvatthāmā hato naro vā kuñjaro vā*, Aśvatthāman; it could be a man or an elephant; is killed, that had made his chariot touch the earth which had been otherwise five finger-lengths above it.

Truth is not only elusive but also superhuman while lying is not. Mahatma Gandhi who put in consistent efforts to tell the truth must have found it the most difficult of his mis-

sions. He escaped the dilemma by 'experimenting' with truth rather than propagating it or relying on it. Truth is a moral concept which has to be taught or imposed but lie is spontaneous. One may have a machine to detect lies, a lie detector, but not a machine to detect truth, a truth detector.

It is because of the extreme difficulty of keeping truth and lie away from each other that the old preceptors and teachers accommodate the role of lies in human life. They sanction in worldly affairs the use of truth paired with untruth: *satyānṛtaśabdau mithunīkṛtya naisargiko 'yaṁ lokavyavahāraḥ*.[14]

Śukra, the guru of King Bali warns the latter to be wary of Vāmana (Viṣṇu's fourth incarnation in the dwarf form) and advises him to hide himself and say that he is not available when he approaches him. The noble king who would not tell a lie, says 'no' to it prompting Guru Śukrācārya to say

na narmayuktaṁ vacanaṁ hinasti
na strīṣu rājan na vivāhakāle
prāṇātyaye sarvadhanāpahāre
pañcānṛtāny āhur apātakāni[15]

"(Untrue) words said in joke cause no harm, nor do they do so in affairs with women, in the performance of marriage, in times of danger to one's life and (at the possibility) of the loss of entire wealth. Five (types of) lies are said not to lead to sin."

In spite of all this the scriptures enjoin adherence to truth, that being the ideal. Truth is the second of the distinctive marks, *lakṣaṇas*, according to Manu of *dharma: ahiṁsā satyam*

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marks, *lakṣaṇas*, according to Manu of *dharma: ahimsa satyam*

asteyam.....daśakaṁ dharmalakṣaṇam.[16] Aśoka also includes it among the *lakṣaṇas* of *dharma* in his Delhi Topra Pillar Edict II in answer to his poser: *kiyaṁ cu dhammeti*, what is *dhamma*? His answer is: *Dhamma* or *Dharma* is *bahukayāne dayā dāne sace socaye sādhave mādave, apāsnavaḥ bahukalyāṇaṁ dayā dānaṁ satyaṁ śaucaṁ sādhutā mārdavam*; compassion, charity, truth, purity, goodness and gentleness.

Indian tradition furnishes in its long history an instance of adherence to truth which has few parallels. The reference is here to King Hariścandra who passed all the severe tests the sage Viśvāmitra had put him to check whether he keeps to his word or not. The king had to forego his kingdom to sell off his wife and son and even his own self but did not allow himself to swerve from his plighted word. It is because of that he earned for himself the sobriquet of *satyavādin, Satyavādī Hariścandra.*

Indian tradition assigns the most exalted position to *satya* in that it equates it with the most sacred of the texts, the Vedas which are imperishable: *satyam evākṣayā Vedāḥ*[17] as also with Brahman. *satyam ekapadaṁ Brahma*. In one word *satya* is Brahman itself, says the *Rāmāyaṇa*.[18] On realizing it, the seer proclaims: *idam aham anṛtāt satyam upaimi*,[19] here I go from untruth to truth. All the ephemeral existence is unreal.; what is real or true is the ever-present, all-knowing, self-existent Supreme, the Highest Truth, *satyam param*, which transcends all illusion *nirastakuhakam*, which we all worship *dhīmahi*.[20] It is this truth which is universal. It was true in the past, it is true in the present and it will be true in the future, *woh si bhi sach, woh hai bhi sach, woh hosi bhi sach*, as says Nanak.

In the ultimate analysis truth and God are one and indivisible. Truth is God and God is truth.

Just as emperor Aśoka put forward the poser: what is *Dharma*, after emphasizig time and again its practice, in the same way many thinkers and intellectuals of old place before themselves the poser as to what *satya* or truth is. The *Kenopaniṣad* has sought to answer this by saying that non-deception, the non-distortion of speech, mind and body is *satya*: *satyam iti amāyitā, akauṭilyaṁ vāṅmanaḥkāyānām*.[21] In simple words *amāyitā* means straightforwardness, the absence of artificiality, which goes with all the three, the speech, the mind and the body. The artificiality in speech goes with the use of words in a way as to yield a meaning different from the one intended. It is not unoften that one listens to words capable of yielding more than one meaning. That is perceived as an art, which lies in giving a different interpretation to one's words or misinterpreting them by giving them a turn and twist. While actually having said something one may come clean in not having said that. This is what diplomacy is. Since speech is a means of expressing thoughts which have their origin in mind, the turn and the twist in speech are only a manifestation of the same in mind. The body will act as per the direction of the mind. If each one of the three, the speech, the mind and the body are *amāyins*, undistorted, what will come out of them will be nothing but *amāyitā*, non distortion,.....or as-it-is ness or *yāthārthya* or truth.

The *Prastāvatariṅgiṇī* refers to an old statement according to which *satya* is that phenomenon where speech, and

mind say one and the same thing: *yathārthe vāṅmanase satyam*.[22] It is our common experience that we very often do not speak out what is in our mind or speak out just the reverse of it. That speech of ours is not true. When a person presses the doorbell about the midnight when we are getting ready to go to bed or are already in it enjoying sound sleep, we curse the fellow who disturbed us. We open the door fretting and fuming but finding a close friend or an acquaintance of long standing, we wreathe our face with a broad smile and don an appearance of extreme happiness in his affording us an opportunity to welcome him. This certainly is no *satya*. Our mind and speech are not at the same wavelength at this time. Whenever they would be so, it would be *satya*.

That we are not always true is the reason that we have started qualifying or quantifying truth. We very often use such expressions as 'it is very true, it is absolutely true, it is nothing but true.' Our expressions like 'it is not far from truth, it is simple truth, it is not totally devoid of truth; it is the whole truth,' etc. betray our dilemma in keeping truth away from untruth, a dilemma which has plagued mankind since times immemorial.

According to the *Liṅgapurāṇa* the description of anything exactly in the same form in which it is seen, heard, inferred or experienced is *satya*, truth, provided it does not cause hurt to beings:

dṛṣṭaṁ śrutaṁ cānumitaṁ svānubhūtaṁ yathārthataḥ
kathanaṁ satyam ity uktaṁ prāṇipīḍāvivarjitam[23]

The expression *prāṇipīḍāvivarjitam*, bereft of hurt to beings in the context of truth, as quoted above, leads us to an

aspect of truth which has received careful attention in Indian tradition. It does not accept mere factual statement as truth but only that statement which does not cause harm or injury to others. If an untruth could save an innocent life, it would be truth. The *Padmapurāṇa* says that the untruth that saves the life of people is truth and the truth that does not do so, is untruth.:

uktvā 'nṛtaṁ bhaved yatra prāṇināṁ prāṇarakṣaṇam
anṛtaṁ tatra satyaṁ syāt satyam apy anṛtaṁ bhavet[24]

The same idea is echoed in the *Yogasūtra*[25] and the *Lāṭasaṁhita*.

The question now is:

Should one persist with it still? Is one to tell a dacoit or a murderer the place of hiding of an innocent person so that he could rob or kill him? Will that be truth? It is at this point that the ancient thinkers paused and after going into every aspect of truth in all their thoroughness found no hesitation in declaring that there is no harm in resorting to untruth in such cases. A work like the *Mahābhārata* clears the air about the practical aspect of truth. In ringing words it declares that where truth is not to be spoken and the untruth needs to be spoken, untruth becomes truth and truth becomes untruth:

bhavet satyam avaktavyaṁ vaktavyam anṛtaṁ bhavet
tatrānṛtaṁ bhavet satyaṁ satyaṁ cāpy anṛtaṁ bhavet[26]

While it is important to speak the truth, be correct about everything, it is equally important that truth should cause no harm to others:

yad vidyamānārthaviṣayam prāṇipīḍākaraṇam tat

satyam apy asatyam[27]

More than one ancient Sanskrit text extols truth assigning it the highest place among the virtuous deeds. The *Brahmavaivartapurāṇa* enumerates such deeds in the ascending order of importance, closing the enumeration with *satya*. It proclaims it as the highest form of *dharma*, *nāsti satyāt paro dharmaḥ*.[28] To build an oblong tank, *vāpī*, says it, is better than (digging) a hundred wells, a sacrifice is better than a hundred wells, a son is better than a sacrifice and truth is better than a sacrifice. In words more forceful than the above it proclaims at yet another place that one earns more merit by gifting an oblong tank, *vāpī*, than a hundred wells, still more merit by giving a girl in marriage than by gifting ten such tanks, still more merit by performing a sacrifice than by giving ten girls in marriage, still more merit by speaking truth than by performing a hundred sacrifices. The whole world stands on truth, says it; it being the basis of everything. It is with it that the wind blows and the sun shines. Everything depends upon it. It is supreme. One who is united with it turns into divinity.

Satya or truth has been accepted as the cardinal principle even for State Policy in India. It occupies the first place among the great qualities of a king: *satyaṁ śauryaṁ dayā tyāgo nṛpasyaite mahāguṇāḥ*.[29] truth, valour, compassion and charity are the great qualities of a king without which he becomes an object of dispargement.

If an alliance is to be forged, it should be with a truthful king.

Kālidāsa makes a very interesting remark in the con-

text of the enumeration of the qualities of the kings of the Raghu race. For keeping to truth, they would exercise economy in words, *satyāya mitabhāṣiṇām*,[30] says he. This is indicative of the deep insight of the ancients into human psychology. Too many words have greater potential of straying away from truth. The boasts and the bombasts would render it difficult for a man to keep to the narrow path of truth. Manu rightly ordains that one should first put one's words in the sieve of truth and then speak: *satyapūtāṁ vaded vācam*.[31]

REFERENCES

1. 11.1
2. ibid.
3. *Iśopaniṣad*, 15
4. Also *Yajurveda*, 40.17
5. ibid.
6. *Muṇḍakopaniṣad*, 3.1.6
7. ibid.
8. *Yājñavalkyasmṛti*, 3.5.312
9. 4.204.
10. *Rāmāyaṇa*, II 19.2
11. ibid., II.19.23
12. ibid., II, 18. 40
13. *Cāṇakyasūtrāṇi*, 417.
14. *Sārīrakamīmāṁsābhāṣya*, I.1.1.160
15. *Mahābhārata*,I. 82.16
16. *Manusmṛti*, 6.92.
17. *Rāmāyaṇa*, II.14.7
18. ibid.
19. *Yajurveda*,1.5

20. *Śrīmadbhāgavatapurāṇa*,1.1
21. *Kenopaniṣad*,4.8
22. *Prastāvatāraṅgiṇī*, p.40
23. *Liṅgapurāṇa*,8.13
24. *Padmapurāṇa*,5.15.392
25. 1.21
26. *Mahābhārata*, Karṇaparva, 69.32
27. *Cāritrasāraṭīkā*, 2.
28. *Brahmavaivartapurāṇa*, Janmakhaṇḍa, Adhyāya 95 (Ref.from *Śabdakalpadruma*)
29. *Hitopadeśa*, 3.31.
30. *Raghuvaṁśa*, 1.7
31. *Manusmṛti*,6.46.

THE CONCEPT AND PRACTICE OF DHARMA IN SANSKRIT LITERATURE

At the time of completion of education a student was given parting instruction by his teacher where he was asked to follow *dharma, dharmaṁ cara*[1] and never to neglect it , *dharmān na pramaditavyam*[2].

Dharma has received utmost attention and fulsome praise in India from sages and seers, thinkers and philosophers, writers and critics. If protected, it protects; if killed, it kills: *dharma eva hato hanti dharmo rakṣati rakṣitaḥ*[3].

Etymologically *dharma* means that which sustains, *dhāraṇād dharma ity āhuḥ, dharma* is what holds people together, *dharmo dhārayate prajāḥ*[4]. *Dharma* is made up of two components √*dhṛ* 'to sustain' and the suffix *man*, the active agent, the one, which sustains. It is a set of rules, conventions and customs, which lay down norms for individual and social conduct and behaviour and which are sanctified by tradition. They form the bedrock of social order. Without these the society turning into a medley of unruly individuals would just disintegrate. Man not observing them would do anything but revert to his original status of animal, *dharmeṇa hīnāḥ paśubhiḥ samānāḥ*[5].

Efforts were on since the early past to define this rather elusive term. Manu, the earliest law-giver has recorded its ten characteristics which are contentment, forgiveness, self-con-

trol, abstention from unrighteously appropriating anything, (obedience to the rules of) purification, coercion of the organs, wisdom, knowledge of the (supreme soul), truthfulness and abstention from anger:

dhṛtiḥ kṣamā damo steyaṁ śaucam indriyanigrahaḥ
dhīr vidyā satyam akrodho daśakaṁ dharmalakṣaṇam[6]

The *Hitopadeśa* reduces the list to eight:

Ijyādhyayanadānāni tapaḥ satyaṁ dhṛtiḥ kṣamā
alobha iti mārgo 'yaṁ dharmasyāṣṭavidhaḥ smṛtaḥ[7]

Sacrifice, study (of the scriptures), charity, penance, truth, fortitude, forgiveness and absence of greed is the eightfold path of *dharma*.

The *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* reduces the number by one; it records seven characteristics of *dharma* :

ahiṁsā satyam asteyam akāmakrodhalobhatā
bhūtapriyahitehā ca dharmo 'yaṁ sārvavarṇikaḥ[8]

Non-violence, truth, non-stealing, absence of passion, anger and greed and the desire to do what is good or agreeable to beings is *dharma* for all the castes.

The figure of seven is reduced to five from his list of ten by Manu. These five characteristics are "abstention from injuring (creatures), truthfulness, abstention from unlawfully appropriating (the goods of others), purity and control of the organs":

ahiṁsā satyam asteyaṁ śaucam indriyanigrahaḥ
etaṁ sāmāsikaṁ dharmaṁ cāturvarṇye 'bravīn Manuḥ[9]

Bringing down the number four from five he says that the Veda, the sacred tradition, the customs of the virtuous men

and what is dear to one's own self constitute *dharma*:

Vedaḥ smṛtiḥ sadācāraḥ svasya ca priyam ātmanaḥ
etac caturvidhaṁ prāhuḥ sākṣād dharmasya lakṣaṇam[10]

The *Mahābhārata* picking up the common denominator of all these declares only one to be the distinguishing feature of it which it describes as its essence, *dharmasarvasva* which is that one should not do to others that which one would not like to encounter oneself: *ātmanaḥ pratikūlāni pareṣāṁ na samācaret*. It also explains it as just *ānṛśaṁsya*[11], compassion which it calls the best of the virtues, *paro dharmaḥ* or *ārjava*, straightforwardness, *ārjavam dharmam ity āhuh*[12].

The approach for succinctness in defining dharma seems to have gained in appeal which is in evidence in Kaṇāda's explanation of it as *yato 'bhyudayaniḥṣreyasasiddhiḥ sa dharmaḥ*[13], that which leads to rise (material prosperity) and final beatitude is *dharma* and that of Jaimini *codanālakṣaṇortho dharmaḥ*, scriptural injunction is *dharma*

Emperor Aśoka defines *dharma*, he calls it *dhamma*, the Pali form of it, as compassion, charity, truthfulness, purity, goodness, gentleness; *dayā, dāne, sace, socave, mādave, sādhave*[14]. This is in essentials the same as enunciated by Manu. *Dharma*, therefore, signifies, according to Manu and Aśoka, a set of ethical principles termed rightly as the common property of all religions.

A word capable of many shades of meaning *dharma* also signifies rule or practice. When it is said *kṛte ca pratikurvīta eṣa dharmaḥ sanātanaḥ*[15], one should return the good deed done, it precisely has the same meaning: *eṣa dharmaḥ*

sanātanaḥ means 'it is the age-old rule'.

Very often the term signifies duty. Manu states the *dharma*-s ,duties, in Kṛtayuga are different from those in Tretā. The same is the case with Dvāpara and Kali. When the *Bhagavadgītā* says *svadharme nidhanaṁ śreyaḥ paradharmo bhayāvahaḥ*[16], it is better to lose one's life while doing one's duty going with one's station in life than to take on the duty prescribed for a different station, it has that very meaning. Kālidāsa too uses the word in that very meaning when he says *ṣaṣṭhāṁśavṛtter api dharma eṣaḥ*[17], it is the duty of one who draws one sixth of the income of the subjects as the State revenue.

As one of the four ends of life, the *caturvarga*, it means righteousness, good deeds. It is this, which is said to be the only friend who follows a person even in death: *eka eva suhṛd dharmo nidhane 'py anuyāti yaḥ*[18].

There could be occasions when duties may conflict with each other. One may have to choose between two duties and prioritize one over the other. To falter in such situations is not uncommon. Kālidāsa describes in the very beginning of his *Raghuvaṁśa* a situation which even a king of the calibre of Dilīpa could not handle properly. Well, it is the duty, the sacred obligation, of a husband to satisfy his wife sexually after the period of menstruation. The king with his mind intent on this was in a hurry not to violate this obligation. This led to his not showing due respect to the divine cow Surabhi by circumambulating her on the way back to the earth after having waited upon Indra, thus incurring her curse of not being blessed with

progeny till such time as he were to propitiate her daughter. Now here was a situation where Dilīpa had two duties, one towards his wife and the other towards the celestial cow. While it was *dharma* to be united with the wife, it was also *dharma*, *sādhvācaraṇa*, to be respectful to the divine cow. Caught in this cleft stick he should have exercized his judgement . Showing respect to divine beings, *devayoni* is more important than hurrying to meet the *manuṣyayoni*, even if that would have implied transgression of duty, *dharmalopa*, temporarily.

In the *Mahābhārata* a situation arose when Yudhiṣṭhira in the game of dice put on stake even his wife Draupadī and lost her after having lost himself first. Draupadī put the question pointedly to the charioteer Pratikāmin deputed to bring her to the Court as to whether a person who had staked himself and lost has the authority over another person to stake him/her. With Pratikāmin reporting back to the Court what Draupadī had told him and Yudhiṣṭhira keeping silent, Duryodhana felt that it would be better if she were to put this question to the Court in person herself. Even though in periods and in one garment to cover her shame, she accompanied Pratikāmin deputed again to bring her and stood in front of the father-in-law Dhṛtarāṣṭra. It was from there that she was dragged by Duḥśāsana under the orders of Duryodhana to the Court where none of those present including Bhīṣma, Vidura, Droṇa, Kṛpa and the other dignitaries gave any answer. At that point of time rose Vikarṇa, one of the younger brothers of Duryodhana to defend Draupadī. The thrust of his argument was that since Draupadī belonged to all the Pāṇḍava brothers, just one among

them had no authority to stake her. This met with rebuttal from Karṇa on the ground that since the other Pāṇḍavas had been staked and had been lost, they had forfeited their right over Draupadī. Moreover, Yudhiṣṭhira had staked all his possessions, which included Draupadī. So the question as to whether he had the authority to stake her had become redundant. Even being dragged and insulted by Duḥśāsana Draupadī repeated her question and wanted an answer for it. It is here that Bhīṣma came forward with the remark that the way of *dharma* was inscrutable, defying even the intelligence of great thinkers. He expressed his helplessness in answering the question effectively and directed her instead to Yudhiṣṭhira. The story goes on reinforcing the view that there could be situations when it could be difficult to interpret *dharma*.

Dharma also is taken to signify right conduct, the conduct that conforms to accepted social norms which could include giving way first to Brahmins, cows and kings, not sleeping during the twilights and studying during them, thou-theeing the elders or addressing them by their name[19]. It also implies observing proper etiquette. It is this which makes old texts enjoin not scratching the head with joined palms[20] or urinating in the direction of the sun and the fire[21] (they being taken as divinities) and urinating away from a habitation and throwing water with the feet's washings away from it[22] and sleeping with the head in the northern and the western directions[23]. The etiquette also includes not speaking when not asked[24].

It has been emphasized time and again that *dharma* is to be followed as a course of life with no mundane motive.

One who tries to milk it or is assailed with doubt about it on having followed it does not get its fruit:

na dharmaphalam āpnoti yo dharmaṁ dogdhum icchati
yaś cainaṁ śaṅkate kṛtvā nāstikyāt pāpacetanaḥ[25]

Declares the *Mahābhārata: dharma* should not be doubted if it has not yielded the (desired result): *na phalābhāvād dharmaḥ śaṅkitavyaḥ*[26]. *Phala* is not for what it is resorted to. Those who remain steadfast in it meet with no misfortune. Even if they were to be striving to realize a particular aim, they should begin first with *dharma* for the realization of the aim, the aim is concomitant to it as is the nectar to the heaven[27]. What is important is that one should keep on doing good deeds. These by themselves would lead to the realization of the desired goal. There should be no reason to doubt the efficacy of *dharma*.

In the course of the discussion about *dharma* a point that needs special attention is that a *dharma* which comes in the way of another *dharma* is no *dharma*, it is a bad path, that which does not step on the other *dharma* is (real) *dharma*:

dharmaṁ yo bādhate dharmo na sa dharmaḥ kuvartma tat
avirodhāt tu yo dharmaḥ sa dharmaḥ satyavikrama[28]

The sage Lomaśa in the course of his conversation with Yudhiṣṭhira narrates the episode of King Śibi of Uśīnara to whom a pigeon, in reality Agni in disguise, repaired for rescue from an eagle, in reality Indra in disguise, chasing it, the divinities out to test the devotion of the king to *dharma*. When the king even though pressed hard by the eagle did not let go the pigeon on the score that it was his duty, *dharma*, to offer protection to a being who had taken refuge with him, the eagle

makes the point that to keep a being, meaning itself, the eagle, without food, the food that nature has earmarked for it, would be *adharma*. Were that, the *śaraṇāgatarakṣaṇa*, protecting the one come for rescue to be treated as *dharma*, then it would be that kind of *dharma* which would come in the way of the other *dharma*, the *dharma* of not keeping a being tormented by hunger away from its food[29].

It is situations such as the above that make *dharma* almost intractable. Rightly has it been said that it is as difficult to divine *dharma* as is to divine the feet of a serpent, *aher iva hi dharmasya padaṁ duḥkhaṁ gaveṣitum*[30]. It is this which has prompted thinkers to proclaim that even truth which is designated as the highest form of *dharma* and the deviation from which as impermissible that "that is truth that leads to the well-being of others, all else is technical truth", *na satyaṁ kevalaṁ satyam anṛtam na tathānṛtam, hitaṁ yat sarvalokasya tathārtaṁ śeṣam anyathā*[31]

"Truth is no truth in itself. Nor is untruth so. Whatever is good for all is truth. The rest is otherwise."

Dharma cannot be understood by reading about it alone; *na dharmaḥ paripāṭhena śakyo bhārata veditum*[32]. It has to be put into practice. It is this, which sustains society, *dhāraṇād dharma ity āhur dharmo dhārayate prajāḥ*. Those who are not motivated fort it are like shriveled ones among grains and the white ants among the winged ones:

pulākā iva dhānyeṣu putrikā iva pakṣiṣu
tadvidhās te manuṣyāṇāṁ yeṣāṁ dharmo na kāraṇam[33]

One needs to have no companion in *dharma*. Alone

one may go with it, *eka eva cared dharmam, nāsti dharme sahāyatā*[34]. So long is one's life, one should go on following *dharma*.

Dharma is broadly of two types, the *pravṛttilakṣaṇa* and the *nivṛttilakṣaṇa*[35], the do's and the don'ts, something which one should do and something which one should not. Among them again roles may change, the circumstances warranting their reversal. What is *adharma* may don the mantle of *dharma* in certain situations and at certain times. Even theft, lie and violence, which are condemned otherwise, could be resorted to as *dharma*, an act of piety in certain situations like when one's life or the life of innocent persons is in danger. It is situations like these which lend legitimacy to the sages like Viśvāmitra eating dog's meat or messiahs of non-violence like Mahatma Gandhi resorting to mercy killing of a cow to enable it to escape mortal pain or Yudhiṣṭhira telling Droṇa who was blasting his army that Aśvatthāman had died. This type of *dharma* which in normal circumstances would have been *adharma* inviting strong censure, the author of the *Mahābhārata* terms as *āvasthika* :

ādānam anṛtaṁ hiṁsā dharmo hy āvasthikaḥ smṛtaḥ[36]

the term being explained by the commentator Nīlakaṇṭha as *avasthāviśeṣe bhavaḥ*, peculiar to a situation, *prāṇatyāgādau adharmasyāpi steyāder dharmatvāt*, when there is risk to life even a condemnable act, *adharma* like theft and so on being *dharma*.

Further, *dharma* can be divided into duties or meritorious acts needed to be practiced by all right-thinking people

and the duties and activities peculiar to certain families, the *kuladharmas*, the family traditions which would put a spanner in the acts of those who may go astray. They exercise a great hold on the family, the clan, the tribe and the community whatever the differences among their members[37] and ensure strict adherence to certain time-honoured norms. Interestingly, it is this community living in Bali in Indonesia that came effectively in the way of the spread of Islam when it was sweeping the other islands of the archipelago. An odd man or two in it could not dare conversion, however inclined for it, for fear of excommunication from the community, rendering his/her life pretty hard.

The scriptures lay down emphatically that a person must go on following *dharma* in whatever station of life even when in dire straits. He has to be even in his dealings with all. For this outer symbols (like ochre robes or matted hair) do not matter :

duḥkhito 'pi cared dharmaṁ yatra kutrāśrame rataḥ
samaḥ sarveṣu bhūteṣu na liṅgaṁ dharmakāraṇam[38]

Dharma yields what one may not have even thought of, *asaṅkalpyam acintyañ ca phalaṁ dharmād avāpyate.* It is *dharma*, which affords protection in all situations. Kauśalyā invokes this very *dharma* when she bids adieu to her son Rāma leaving for exile for fourteen years :

yaṁ pālayasi dharmaṁ tvaṁ prītyā ca niyamena ca
sa vai rāghavaśārdūla dharmas tvām abhirakṣatu[39]

"O ye the tiger among the descendants of the race of Raghu, may that *dharma* which thou had been following joyfully and

regularly, protect thee."

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2. ibid.
3. *Manusmṛti*, 8.15.
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5. *Hitopadeśa*, Kathāmukha, 25.
6. *Manusmṛti*, 6.9
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9. *Manu*, 10.63.
10. ibid., 2.12.
11. *Mbh.*, Vana. 213.30.
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13. *Yogasūtra*, 4.100.
14. Delhi Topra Pillar Inscription No.7, line 12.
15. *Rāmāyaṇa*, 5.1.106.
16. 3.35.
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19. *Mbh.*, Śānti. 193.25.
20. ibid., Anu. 10469.
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22. ibid., 104.82.
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25. ibid., Vana. 31.6.
26. ibid., 31.38.
27. ibid., *nahi dharmād apaity arthaḥ svargalokād iyāmṛtam.*

Udyoga. 37.48.

28. ibid., 131.11.
29. ibid., Chappter 131.
30. ibid., Śānti.132.20.
31. *Bhāratamañjarī*, Śānti. 402.
32. *Mbh.*, Śānti. 260.3.
33. ibid., 181.7.
34. ibid., 193.32.
35. ibid., 241.6.
36. ibid., 36.11.
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38. *Hitopadeśa*, 1.91.
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THE CONCEPT AND PRACTICE OF *DĀNA*, CHARITY, IN SANSKRIT LITERATURE

There has been great emphasis on the quality of *dāna*, charity in Sanskrit literature. The spirit behind this must have been the desire to share one's wealth and resources with the needy and the deprived, these (the wealth and the resources being meant by nature for everybody) of one's own free volition. There is no compulsion of any sort for parting with a portion of one's possessions and sharing it with others except the inner urge of making merit which may not always be free from the taint of self-interest in that the philanthropist or the donor while offering something by way of charity may have the idea that it will promote his wellbeing and that of his kith and kin.

Charity is defined as:

parānugrahabuddhyā svavittaparityāgo dānam[1] ; and *anugrahārthaṁ svasyātisargo dānam*[2] , parting of his possession by a person to help others.

The ancient thinkers of India have taken precaution to guard against the possibility of the act of charity leading to the growth of a feeling of superiority among donors over the supplicants, the less privileged ones, which may have the seeds in it of arrogance and which could well erode the good impact of the good deed. This point is made tellingly in the *Taittirīyopaniṣad*[3] in the address of the teacher to the pupil as he readies himself to go back home on completion of his education. The teacher says :, *śraddhayā deyam, āśraddhá 'deyam,*

śriyā deyam, hriyā deyam, bhiyā deyam, give respectfully, do not give disrespectfully, give in plenty, give in a spirit of humility, give with a feeling of fear.

This again is the thinking behind the categorization of charity. According to the *Bhagavadgītā* it is of three types, Sāttvika, Rājasa and Tāmasa. The Sāttvika is one which is given as a matter of duty in proper time and place to a worthy person who has done no good turn :

dātavyam iti yad dānaṁ dīyate 'nupakāriṇe
deśe kāle ca pātre ca tad dānaṁ sāttvikaṁ smṛtam[4]

The Rājasa is that which is given with the hope of return or reward or is given reluctantly :

yat tu pratyupakārārthaṁ phalam uddiśya vā punaḥ
dīyate ca parikliṣṭaṁ tad rājasam iti smṛtam[5]

The Tāmasa is which is given at a wrong place and time or to an unworthy person without proper ceremony or with insult :

adeśakāle yad dānam apātrebhyaś ca dīyate
asatkṛtya avajñātaṁ tat tāmasam udāhṛtam[6]

Apart from the above, there is another type of categorization of charity which has for its basis the different kinds of motivations The *Skandapurāṇa*[7] has six types of them : *dharmadāna, arthadāna, kāmadāna, vrīḍādāna, harṣadāna* and *bhayadāna*. The *dharmadāna* is that which is given routinely to the deserving ones, as a matter of duty, *dharmabuddhyā*, with no altruistic motive *anavekṣya prayojanam*. *arthadāna* is to extract money out of greed from a wealthy person through allurement, *kāmadāna* is giving gifts

to undeserving persons to serve a particular purpose, *vrīḍādāna* is giving charity to retrieve one's honour just to honour the promise of charity made in an assembly earlier, *harṣadāna* is giving gift/gifts as an expression of one's joy on hearing or seeing pleasant things, *bhayadāna* is to go in for charitable acts to ward off censure, danger or violence. At another place the same Purāṇa records another type of *dāna*, the *kāmyadāna*, the *dāna* given willingly, *icchāsaṁstham*, for begetting children, victory, prosperity, wife, son and so on.

The best of the charities is that which is given in all humility to a deserving person or to an institution with a feeling that it would do good to one's own self, the feeling of *ātmānugraha*, doing favour to one's own self, a point well-made in the *Svapnavāsavadatta* of Bhāsa where the Chamberlain announces the wish of the Magadha Princess Padmāvatī on a visit to the hermitage of the Queen Mother to offer gifts as a personal favour , *ātmānugraham icchatīha nṛpajā kasyādya kiṁ dīyatām*[8]

Ancient texts expressely prohibit the boast of charity : *na dattvā parikīrtayet* for it tends to diminish fame : *kīrtir hrasati kīrtanāt.*

Of all the gifts it is the gift of knowledge which is the best:

sarvebhyo 'pi hi dānebhyo brahmadānaṁ viśiṣyate

And this gift has to be given with the least of the altruistic consideration. One who sells knowledge for eking out a living is a trader with his knowledge as the ware : *yasyāgamaḥ kevalajīvikāyai taṁ jñānapaṇyaṁ vaṇijaṁ vadanti*. As per the

Agnipurāṇa one who teaches the Veda and music and dance qualifies himself for heaven. Now the gift of knowledge may not be just in the form of teaching only, it could be in the form of presentation of a book too, the book that one has written :

likhitvā pustakaṁ dattvā bhuktimuktim avāpnuyāt
vedaśāstraṁ nṛtyagītaṁ yo 'dhyāpayati nākabhāk[9].

The presenter of a book gets enjoyment and heaven.It is not just that one should return favour, one should do so many times that over. The sun sucks water to return it thousand-fold: *sahasraguṇam utsraṣṭum ādatte hi rasaṁ raviḥ*[10]. This is what Kālidāsa has said but much earlier, the Veda had preached that earn with hundred hands and distribute with thousand: *śatahasta samāhara sahasrahasta saṅkira*[11].

Charity has to be spontaneous, so spontaneous that a donor may have to have just the feel of the need of a supplicant without his even expressing it : *taṁ dhig astu kalayann api vāñchām arthivāgavasaraṁ sahate yaḥ*[12].

Faith in rebirth being ingrained in Indian psyche, it is believed that a supplicant of this birth, the one who begs, saying 'give me','give me', must have turned away the supplicants in earlier birth empty-handed saying ' I do not have', 'I do not have'. It is this retribution of refusal to give that has brought upon them the misery of begging before others;

akṣaradvyam abhyastam nāsti nāstīti yat purā
tad idam dehi dehīti viparītam upasthitam[13]

This should serve as warning to those who turn away the supplicants. It could well be that they themselves have to be supplicants in the next birth. This very consideration should

lead them to the right track in not turning away the poor and the needy who approach them for help. To give in charity is not just a moral principle with the Indians, something which is good for society in relieving its misery, in bringing a cheer or two to the lowly and the miserable or just a principle for self-elevation, to raise oneself to higher levels of thought and conduct resulting in spiritual upliftment bringing in its train joy and bliss but also a principle of reaping what one has sown from which there is no escape. It is for this consideration alone, if not for any other, that one should not turn away supplicants.

If one has made a promise to give, one should fulfil it, no matter at what cost. There is no question of his going back on it, for, that would invite dire consequences. Declares the *Agnipurāṇa*: He who having promised to deities, teachers and parents does not give, has his hundred generations annihilated:

kulānāṁ tu śataṁ hanyād aprayacchan pratiśrutam
devānāṁ ca gurūṇāṁ ca mātāpitros tathaiva ca[14]

To give charity is no good in itself unless it were to go to the deserving one, the *pātra*, a point emphasized time and again in ancient texts : *pātrapratigatā vidyā pātrapratigataṁ dhanam*, knowledge to the deserving one and the money also to the same. Charity given to the undeserving one yields unwelcome result: *kupātreṣu tathā dattaṁ danaṁ kuphaladaṁ bhavet*[15].

Philanthropy is a virtue that goes with people who give away in charity tosupplicants not only money but even the wife and the son keeping back nothing for themselves :*yācakebhyo dadāty arthaṁ bhāryāṁ putrādikam tv api na saṅgṛhṇāti cayal*

kiñcid dānaśīlaḥ sa ucyate[16].

Indian tradition furnishes a number of instances of such philanthropists. Dadhīci, Bali. Karṇa and many others like them who have passed into legends for this quality of theirs. Remembered by countless millions over the centuries they have turned into proverbial figures. Knowing full well and also reminded as in the case of Karṇa by his father, the sun, that he would be duped by Indra in the guise of a supplicant he does not hesitate to part with his armour and the ear-rings which were integral to his body. The removal of these entailed for him the virtual peeling off of his skin, a case of supreme sacrifice just to uphold his vow of not turning away a supplicant. The sacrifice was all the more poignant in that it made him in the absence of the natural shield vulnerable to the attack of the enemy which he could have warded off had he refused to part with what had been asked for from him. It was this spirit of not refusing a beggar that made these great people objects of perfidy. Had it not been so, Bali would not have been duped by Viṣṇu in the guise of a dwarf who asked to provide him only his three-feet-size of space. It is the acceptance of this request that landed the unsuspecting demon to the spectacle of the supplicant extending the size of each of his three steps to cover the entire heaven, the mid-region and the earth and pushing him (the philanthropist) to the nether world. The celebrated sage Dadhīci offered his bones to gods to enable their architect to fashion a thunderbolt with which Indra defeated Vṛtra and other demons. The sound of 'give' would never cease in

the palace of Dilīpa (three types of sounds never stopped reverberating in his palace, the sound of the *mantras*, the twang of the bows and the sound of 'be given': *trayo ghoṣā na jīryanti Dilīpasya niveśane mantraghoṣo dhanurghoṣo dīyatām iti vai trayaḥ*).

There is a record in ritual texts of a sacrifice called Viśvajit wherein a king would part with all his possessions acquired by him in the course of the world conquest, the *digvijaya*, reducing himself in the process to utmost penury. Kālidāsa records in his *Raghuvaṁśa*[17] the performance of this sacrifice by King Raghu after he had carried out the conquest of the quarters. Just when he had donated everything approached him a young graduand Kautsa to ask from him the high amount of fourteen crores that he had to pay his teacher by way of fee, the *dakṣiṇā*. The king with nothing left with him and still not willing to turn away the supplicant approaching him for the noble purpose of paying the *dakṣiṇā* to the teacher resolved to procure the requisite amount from Kubera. the god of wealth, by launching an invasion on him the following morning, the invasion which was not to take place, gold having rained in the treasury the night before. Kālidāsa also records the rare spectacle of the king insisting upon the entire haul of gold being gifted away to the graduand and the graduand agreeing to accept only the stipulated amount but relenting when told that the extra amount could help the upkeep of the Āśrama, the hermitage of his teacher.

With wealth there are three possibilities : one, it can be

given in charity, two, it can be used in enjoyments and three it can go waste. One who does not give, nor uses it up has it wasted away :

dānaṁ bhogo nāśas tisro gatayo bhavanti vittasya
yo na dadāti na bhuṅkte tasya tṛtīyā gatir bhavati[18]

Dāna, charity, has precedence, as seen from the above, over the other use of wealth, the self-use.

There is an age-old tradition in India of educational institutions being supported by private donations. The State had hardly to do anything with them. The Gurukulas, the Pāṭhaśālas, the Catuṣpāṭhīs and the Tols thrived on charity, as do some of them even now. This was and still is also the case with the Āśramas. It was considered as is considered even now, though on a much reduced scale, an act of piety to build rest houses, the Dharmaśālās for visitors, to provide free meals to the hungry, to set up kiosks for water for the thirsty and to give alms to the poor and the needy. The idea of making merit provided the necessary motivation to the rich and the affluent to take to these charitable activities.

In ancient India as early as the time of the Upaniṣads the sages felt the need of raising ample stocks of food , *annam bahu kurvīta, tad vratam*, says the *Taittirīyopaniṣad* (3.9). The same Upaniṣad goes on to say that there should be no refusal of food to anybody. Whoever comes to the house has got to be served sufficient food. This is a vow to be observed : *na kañcana vasatau pratyācakṣīta, tad vratam* (3.10).

A *mantra* of the *Ṛgveda* holds a person not willing to give food to others, gaining the same for no purpose. In truth it

is his slaughter. He neither satisfies the deity, nor the friend. One who eats alone, eats sin alone :

mogham annaṁ vindate apracetā:
satyaṁ bravīmi vadha it sa tasya
nāryamaṇaṁ puṣyati no sakhāyaṁ
kevalāgho bhavati kevalādī[19]

Not only this *mantra*, the entire hymn comprising nine *mantras* presents a picture of charity instructing the people as it does to share their food with others who have no food or have insufficient quantity of it. Says the *mantra* 10.117.1: "Hunger is death and one who eats but gives food to none moves quickly towards death. One who gives food is saved from extinction and a person not giving food hardly finds anything or any one capable of giving him happiness." Another *mantra* in the same hymn decries the attitude of 'let others give'. "Remember", says it, "the two heads are not equally efficient in accomplishing a particular task, two cows do not yield the same amount of milk, the twins do not have the same valour and members of the same family are not equally charitable. So, if one has some food, one should give a share of it to others." Going on with the same theme, the hymn says, "one who does not give food to a person needing it or to a guest come to his house, does not find happiness. A person causing pain by his stiff attitude in not giving food to a supplicant and eats in his presence cannot be happy."

The food is not to be shared only with human beings, it has to be offered before one starts to partake of it even to birds, insects and animals. The tradition of taking out five morsels,

the *pañcagrāsas*, from the food served for the purpose in orthodox Hindu households persists even today. This has as its background the thinking, as elaborated in the *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* that the food is meant for everybody, the Creator having created it for all : *idam evāsya tat sādhāraṇam annaṁ yad idam adyate*[20]. A piece with this thinking is the declaration of the *Gītā* that those who cook only for themselves, those sinners (just) eat sin : *bhuñjate tetuaghaṁ pāpā ye pacanty ātmakāraṇāt*[21]. A human being is a part of the Cosmic Order. Whatever he has from this Order, he has to share with others.

Even though charity has won high praise from ancient thinkers, it has elicited from them certain riders too. These are threefold. One, the money should have been self-earned. Two, the charity should conform to one's capacity so that one may not have to repent later: *dānaṁ sattvamitaṁ dadyān na paścāttāpadūṣitam*[22]. Three, gifting of money should cause no torment or misery to one's own people and others :

aparābādham akleśaṁ svayatnenārjitaṁ dhanam
svalpaṁ vā vipulaṁ vāpi deyam ity abhidhīyate
śakte 'parajane dātā svajane duḥkhajīvini
madhvāpānaviṣādaḥ sa dharmāṇāṁ pratirūpakaḥ[23]

"He who gives to others who are self-sufficient while his own people are living a miserable life, is a mere replica of *Dharma*, a false *Dharmātman*, the drinker of wine and swallower of poison".

The ancient texts have also taken care to emphasize that even if one is in a position to accept charity one should

refrain from it; *pratigrahasamartho 'pi na prasajyet parigrahe*[24]. Such a person earns for himself the prosperous worlds to which repair the philanthropists.

Charity, *dāna*, forms the cornerstone of the thinking of India. It is a duty , *dānaṁ dharmaḥ*[25], which one has to perform. Without it there is no good name, *na dānena vinā yaśaḥ*[26]. It has to be given willingly, with a smiling face, *smitena* and with dignity, *satkārapūrvam*[27]. No condemnation is enough of one who does not give. He is a far weightier burden on the earth than the trees, the mountains and the oceans, *tena bhūmir atibhāravatīyam, na drumair; na giribhir na samudraiḥ*[28]. Nothing can more tellingly express the feeling of revulsion for him than the trisyllabic word *arāti*, enemy, which etymologically means 'who does not give', *nāsti rātir dānaṁ yasya*. The Indian society looked upon such a person as its enemy !

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THE CONCEPT AND PRACTICE OF ĀCĀRA OR SADĀCĀRA

Indian tradition has laid great emphasis on *ācāra* or *sadācāra*, good conduct, so much so that it has been proclaimed as the highest virtue: *ācāraḥ paramo dharmaḥ*.[1] One not observing it even the Vedas, the purest of the pure, cannot redeem: *ācārahīnaṁ na punanti vedāḥ*.[2]

The Śāstras proclaim the supremacy of *ācāra* which comprises practising a set of rules sanctified by tradition and codified in the texts. These rules are meant to regulate individual conduct for improving the quality of human life by making him fall in line with the order devised to uphold smooth and normal functioning of society. The goodness in the conduct of the individual is relative to his usefulness in social well-being. By following *ācāra*, the time-tested long-evolved code, one leads a more peaceful life. It is *ācāra*, which exercises control on him, and this springs from within. One who follows it is according to the *Devībhāgavata-purāṇa* always pure, always happy:

ācāravān sadā pūtaḥ ācāravān sadā sukhī[3]

As per the *Viṣṇudharmottara-purāṇa*, a person, even though possessed of (good) marks, does not imbibe knowledge, nor anything else he aspires, if he is devoid of *ācāra*. Such a man goes to hell:

sarvalakṣaṇayukto 'pi naras tv ācāravarjitaḥ

na prāpnoti tathā vidyāṁ na ca kiñcid abhīpsitam[4]

A person of good conduct, *ācāravān puruṣa*, however, enjoys heaven, fame, long life, honour and all the worldly pleasures :

ācāraḥ svargajanana ācāraḥ kīrtivardhanaḥ
ācāraś ca tathāyuṣyo dhanyo lokasukhāvahaḥ[5]

ācārayuktas tridivaṁ prayāti
ācāravān eva bhavaty arogaḥ
ācāravān eva ciraṁ tu jīved
ācāravān eva bhunakti lakṣmīm[6]

Manu terms *ācāra* as the source of dharma: *ācāraprabhavo dharmaḥ*.

All this fulsome praise of *ācāra* leads us to the question as to what this *ācāra* is. Its etymology is two fold : *ācaryate anena and ācarati asmin*, 'one through which is conducted (life)' and 'in which one conducts oneself.'

Manu while emphasizing the importance of his work draws attention to the fact that it fully states the law as well as the immemorial (*śāśvata*) rule of conduct, *ācāraś caiva śāśvataḥ*.[7] Kulluka, the Manu commentator explains *śāśvataḥ* as *pāramparyāgataḥ*, which has come down from generation to generation. Proceeding further Manu terming it as the transcendant law points to its framework; it is the one which is taught in the revealed texts in the sacred tradition, *śrutyuktaḥ smārta eva ca*,[8] and enjoins that a man having regard for himself should always be careful to follow it, *tasmād asmin sadā yukto nityaṁ syād ātmavān dvijaḥ*.[9]

A Brāhmaṇa who departs from the rule of conduct, *ācāra*, does not reap the fruit of the Veda while he who follows it obtains its full reward. To use the *Mahābhārata* imagery the Vedic *mantras* leave the person devoid of *ācāra* at the time of death as do the birds the nest when they develop wings: *nīḍaṁ śakuntā iva jātapakṣāś chandāṁsy enaṁ prajahaty antakāle.*[10]

Sadācāra is what *ācāra* is though the *sat* part of it is explained differently. The compound in it is dissolved in three ways: *saṁś cāsau ācāraś ca sadācāraḥ*, the *ācāra*, the conduct as it exists; *sad=samyak ācāraḥ sadācāraḥ*, good conduct; *satām=sādhūnām ācāra iti sadācāraḥ*, the conduct of the good people, the dissolution acceptable to the *Viṣṇupurāṇa* as should be clear from the explanation of it that it furnishes: *sādhavaḥ kṣīṇadoṣās tu sac chabdaḥ sādhuvācakaḥ, teṣām ācaraṇaṁ yat tu sadācāraḥ sa ucyate*,[11] the sadhus, the good people are those who have no infirmities, the word *sat* conveys those very people, the sādhus, the conduct, the *ācāra*, of those people is what *sadācāra* is. According to Manu *sadācāra* is what is *śrutismṛtyudita*,[12] declared in the revealed texts and in sacred tradition, the same thing as he said in the case of *ācāra*, *śrutyuktaḥ smārta eva ca;*[13] only the words are slightly different here.

According to Manu the custom handed down in regular succession, *pāramparyakramāgataḥ*,[14] among the four castes and the mixed races of the country called Brahmāvarta, the country made by gods and lying between the divine rivers

Sarasvatī and Dṛṣadvatī is called *sadācāra*, the conduct of virtuous people, *sadācāra ucyate.*[15]

Ācārā or *sadacārā* can be of three types : *kāyika*, *vācika* and *mānasika*, physical, verbal and mental called by Jain Acaryas as *samyak jñāna*, *samyak dṛṣṭi* and *samyak cāritrya*. Physical cleanliness through bath, *snāna*, the observance of celibacy, *brahmacarya*, non-violence, *ahiṁsā*, doing good to others, *paropakāra*, worship of gods, *devapūjā*, etc. is physical *ācāra*. To speak truth, *satyabhāṣaṇa*, to speak gently without injuring the feelings of others, *priyabhāṣaṇa*, to read or recite holy texts, to sing the praise of God, *īsvarastavana* is verbal *sadācāra*. Gentleness, compassion, fortitude, steadfastness, forgiveness and keeping away from six types of weaknesses, *doṣas*, is mental *sadācāra*.

There is emphasis in old texts on the inculcation of *ācāra*. An *ācārya* is directed to teach his pupils *ācāra* along with imparting knowledge of different disciplines: *sadācārāṁś ca śikṣayet*. As a matter of fact, that is his primary duty, he being *ācārya*, *ācāryaḥ kasmāt, ācāraṁ grāhayati*,[16] why is *ācārya* called so, because he teaches *ācāra*. Apart from his teaching of it, he also conveys it to his pupils through his personal conduct, which is expected to set the example to him. The parting advice of the *ācārya* at the end of the period of instruction to his pupil is *satyaṁ vada, dharmaṁ cara, svādhyāyān mā pramadaḥ, mātṛdevo bhava, pitṛdevo bhava, ācāryadevo bhava, atithidevo bhava*, [17] speak truth, follow *dharma*, do not neglect the study of the Veda, look upon your mother as a deity, your father as a deity, your teacher as a deity,

the guest as a deity. Lastly realizing that he being just human might have faltered in maintaining proper conduct himself, he cautions the pupil that he should follow all his good deeds and not others, *yāny asmākaṁ sucaritāni tāni tayopāsyāni no itarāṇi*.

The Nīti texts, every one of them, are full of instructions as to how one is to conduct oneself in life. So are the works on tales and fables like the *Pañcatantra* and the *Hitopadeśa* where each tale or fable carries a moral. The *Mahābhārata*, the veritable repertory of Indian wisdom, has enough of statements about the ideal human conduct individually and societally. So has the sister epic the *Rāmāyaṇa*. They provide guidelines about the acceptable norms of conduct which *ācāra* or *sadācāra* is. It needs no emphasis that most of these norms are universal in nature, not being limited to any particular region or period of time. Take, for instance, the norm of showing of respect to elders. A younger person would hold his breath high till he had left his seat and bowed to the elderly :

ūrdhvaṁ prāṇā hy utkrāmanti yūnaḥ sthavira āyati
pratyutthānābhivādābhyāṁ punas tān pratipadyate[18]

It is in line with this feeling of respect for the elders that the *Mahābhārata* prohibits the use of Thou-Thee for the elders and addressing them by their name : *tvaṅkāraṁ nāmadheyaṁ ca jyeṣṭhānāṁ parivarjayet*.[19]

The Upaniṣad enjoins :Treat the guest as a deity, *atithidevo bhava*. Any guest coming to the house has to be shown proper courtesy. He is to be received with pleasant looks, cheerful heart and sweet words. One should get up, advance

towards him and offer him a seat; that is the established practice :

cakṣur dadyān mano dadyād vācaṁ dadyāc ca sūnṛtām
utthāya cāsanaṁ dadyād eṣa dharmaḥ sanātanaḥ[20]

The houses of the good are in no want of grass (seat made of it, the mat), space (the place to sit), water (to wash feet and to drink) and sweet and pleasant words :

tṛṇāni bhūmir udakaṁ vāk caturthī ca sūnṛtā
satām etāni geheṣu nocchidyante kadācana[21]

The honour for guests is so ingrained in Indian psyche that it is enjoined that even if an enemy were to visit somebody, due hospitality should be extended to him : *arāv apy ucitaṁ kāryam ātithyaṁ gṛham āgate.*[22]

The *ācāra* demands that due consideration be shown to womenfolk. For this the one evidence is not Manu's oft-quoted injunction ; *yatra nāryas tu pūjyante ramante tatra devatāḥ*,[23] "where women are shown respect, the gods revel there". The evidence is found also in the etiquette prescribed in the *Mahābhārata* of giving them the right of the way. The same also holds good for the physically handicapped, the blind and the deaf and the carriers of load. The turn of the king, howsoever mighty he may be, comes after all the above with Brāhmaṇa, the intellectual stealing the palm over all others :

andhasya panthā badhirasya panthāḥ
striyaḥ panthā bhāravāhasya panthāḥ
rājñaḥ panthā Brāhmaṇenāsametya
sametya tu Brāhmaṇasyaiva panthāḥ[24]

The right of the way also extends to cows, a pregnant

woman, an elderly person and a weakling. The right of the way, spoken of here, is symbolic of the consideration the society has to give to certain sections of it which are incapable of fending for themselves to deserve to be called a civil society. That is *ācāra*.

It is a part of good conduct that one should not speak unasked nor should one answer anybody's question if put with a bad intent : *nāpṛṣṭaḥ kasyacid brūyān na cānyāyena pṛcchataḥ*.[25] It is also imperative that one should be correct and forthright in one's speech in an assembly and not to keep mum or speak falsely which would mean courting sin :

sabhāṁ vā na praveṣṭavyaṁ vaktavyaṁ vā samañjasam
abruvan vibruvan vāpi naro bhavati kilbiṣī[26]

Since the toilets in the modern sense of the term did not exist in the ancient period, people would ease themselves out in the open as they do even now in the countryside in India. Proper hygiene and environmental purity desired the practice of certain norms in the matter of urination and defecation. The urination has to be at a distance from a habitation and also not in the direction of the sun, the fire, the cows, a Brahmin, nor has it to be on a thoroughfare, nor in water. One has not to urinate and defecate in water, nor spit in it, nor should take bath naked. The water after the feet have been washed in it and the left overs of the food have to be disposed of at a distance from the living place :

dūrād āvasathān mūtraṁ dūrāt pādāvasecanam
ucchiṣṭotsarjanaṁ caiva dūre kāryaṁ hitaiṣiṇā.[27]

There is clear disapproval for sleeping, studying and

eating during the twilight :

sandhyāyāṁ na svaped rājan vidyāṁ na ca samācaret
na bhuñjīta ca medhāvī tathāyur vindate mahat[28]

Bharata in the *Rāmāyaṇa* while embarking on vows to clear himself of the insinuation of being a party to the design of sending Rāma in exile makes a pointed reference to sleeping during the twilights. Says he : May I court that sin as would accrue to one who sleeps during the twilight.[29]

It is never good manners to ridicule the physically handicapped ; the blind, the lame and the deaf as also the miserable: *dīnāndhapaṅgubadhirā nopahāsyāḥ kadācana.*[30] This norm also extends to those who are destitute of knowledge, are weighed down with age, are ugly and poor as also of low birth:

hīnāṅgān atiriktāṅgān vidyāhīnān vayodhikān
rūpadravyavihīnāṅś ca jātihīnāṅś ca nākṣipet[31]

As a matter of fact, *ācāra* demands proper regard and consideration to the aged. In no case are they to be considered a burden on society. With experience behind them, they are an object of veneration. There are countless references in ancient texts where anyone deviating from established conduct is specifically charged in not having served the aged and the elderly. In no case are they to be addressed by name nor in the tenor of Thou-Thee : *tvaṅkāraṁ nāmadheyaṁ ca jyeṣṭhānāṁ parivarjayet.*[32]

The *ācāra* concerns itself with every department of human life, not leaving anything untouched. It goes to the extent of laying down does and donts with regard to such small things as chewing nails and clipping hair. It prohibits drinking water

through joined palms, *jalaṁ nāñjalinā pibet,*[33] scratching the head with both hands at the same time, *na saṁhatābhyāṁ pāṇibhyāṁ kaṇḍūyet jātu vai śiraḥ,*[34] sitting with legs and feet wide open, *na kṣiptapādajaṅghaś ca prājñas tiṣṭhet kadācana,* putting one foot over the other, *pādaṁ pādena nākrāmet,*[35] spread the feet in the direction of the elders and the deities, *gurudevān prati tathā na ca pādau prasārayet.*[36] There are norms for everything : In which direction is one to sleep, what one has to do after getting up in the morning, how one has to pass urine and defecate and in which direction and in which part of the day, how one has to take bath and where, how one has to eat and in which direction and which food and so on.

The Smṛtis like the *Manusmṛti* and the Purāṇas like the *Vāmana,*[37] the *Padma,*[38] the *Viṣṇu*[39] and the *Mārkaṇḍeya*[40] have full sections in them on *ācāra*. A brief synopsis of the same from one of them, the *Vāmana* is presented here to form an idea of the ancient Indian perception of *ācāra or sadācāra :*

Getting up in the morning a person should recite the Suprabhāta sūkta. After that he should go out to ease himself. In no case should he do so on the path where there are (idols) of deities or cows or Brāhmaṇas or on the highway or on a square or in a cow-pen. He should be facing the north if he were to pass urine or ease himself during the daytime or in the twilights and the south during the nights. He is not to pass urine on a road or on ashes or in a cow-pen or in a ploughed land or in water or on altar of bricks or a mountain or on the ruins of a temple or on an anthill or in holes inhabited by living creatures; nor has he to pass it standing or walking, nor on reaching the

bank of a river. He is not to take bath naked and eat with one garment only. He is not to associate himself with the wicked. He is to avoid food during twilights and sex during the day-time. He should not move about aimlessly, give charity and kill animals for no reason. He should keep away from the wealth and wives of others nor should he steal a glance at somebody else's wife if she is naked, nor should he exchange words with thieves. He should avoid the sight of a woman in menses, nor should he have contact with her, nor talk to her. He should not sleep naked nor should he look at his wife while she eats, sneezes or yawns or sits at ease, nor when she applies collerium to her eyes, has anointed or uncovered herself. He should not throw urine or faeces into water nor saliva (Compare the *Manusmṛti* injunction : nāpsu mūtra purīṣṁv va ṣṭhivanaṁ vā samutsṛjet)[41] nor clothes defiled by impure substances, nor any other impure thing, nor blood, nor poisonous things. He should not look at the sun when it rises and sets, is eclipsed or is reflected in water or is in the middle of the sky. Were he to touch anything impure, he should have bath. So should he have it if he were to mix with people who had carried a dead body. He should not interrupt a cow who is suckling her calf, nor tell anybody of it. He should not eat anything from which oil has been extracted. He should not be a glutton. He should not eat very early in the morning, nor very late in the evening. He should not drink water out of his joined palms, nor eat food placed in lap or show (idle) curiosity. He should never wash his feet in a vessel of white brass. He should not eat out of a broken dish or out of which the appearance of which is de-

filed. He should not use shoes, garments, string, ornaments, garland and water vessel if used by others. He should not clip nails or hair.

The list goes on and on. A civil man is expected to talk gently, help others, observe family traditions, show respect to elders and so conduct himself as not to court frowns of others. He is to invoke deities for their blessings. This is *ācāra*, the law sanctified by tradition and recorded in the Śruti and the Smṛti which people, the decent ones follow and win fame thereby in this world : *śrutismṛtyuditaṁ dharmam anutiṣṭhan hi mānava iha kīrtim avāpnoti* [42] and which occupies the center stage in Indian life.

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9. ibid.
10. Udyogaparva, 35. 42. The lines are found with a slight difference In *Vasiṣṭhasmṛti*, 6.3 : *chandāṁsy enaṁ mṛtyukāle tyajanti nīḍaṁ śakuntā iva jātapakṣaḥ*.
11. *Viṣṇupurāṇa*, III.11.3.
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13. 1.108.
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18. *Anuśāsanaparva*, 104.64.
19. Śāntiparva, 193.25.
20. Vanaparva, 2.56.
21. ibid. 2.54.
22. Śāntiparva, 186.5.
23. III.56.
24. Vanaparva, 133.1.
25. Śāntiparva, 28735.
26. *Manusmṛti*, VIII.13.
27. Anuśāsanaparva, 104.82.
28. ibid. 104.19.
29. Ayodhyakāṇḍa, 75.44
30. *Śukranīti*, III.15.
31. *Manusmṛti*, IV.141.
32. Śāntiparva, 193.25.
33. *Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa*, 34.113. The drinking of water, however, is permitted out of one hand, the right one : *dakṣiṇaṁ tu karaṁ kṛtvā gokarṇākṛtivat punaḥ triḥ pibed īpsitaṁ toyam. Hārītasmṛti*, 4.26.
34. ibid. 34.44.
35. ibid.34.45.
36. 34.112
37. Chapter IV.

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THE CONCEPT AND PRACTICE OF *KARUṆĀ* (COMPASSION) IN SANSKRIT LITERATURE

While English has only three words, pity, mercy and compassion in the sense of helping others when in adverse circumstances, Sanskrit has double that number, *anukampā, anukros'a anugraha, karuṇā, kṛpā* and *dayā,* which is a proof, if ever that were needed, of the importance the Indian tradition attaches to it. Generally these Sanskrit words are taken to be synonymous with each other but, as is the case with many other synonyms, may not really be so. Each one of these may represent a shade of the feeling which in its entirety may be difficult of expression. The most common of these words is *dayā* which Tulasīdāsa, the great saint-poet has proclaimed as the source or the root of *dharma* :

daṵā dharma kā mūla hai pāpa mūla abhimāna

Tulasī daṵā na choṛiṵe joh lag ghaṭa meṅ prāṇa

"*Dayā,* compassion is the root of *dharma,* pride or arrogance is the root of sin. Says Tulasī, do not give up *daṵā* so long as you have life in you."

This *dayā* would be possible only if one has cultivated the spirit that all beings are equal. With that spirit one can identify oneself with others and own their sorrow and suffering. Just as a person would try to relieve himself of his troubles, his suffering, by putting up the requisite efforts, in the same way would he try to remove those of others. That is the *samadṛṣṭi,*

the feeling of commonness which propels a person to do all he can, even to risk his life as in the case of rescuing a person drowning in a river or caught up in flames in a building on fire or to surrender all he has, even his hard-earned savings, to render help to others so that they could be saved and their suffering mitigated. It is immaterial whether he knows the others or not. It is just the right impulse at the right moment. That is *dayā*. That is how it is defined in the *Vāyupurāṇa* :

ātmavat sarvabhūteṣu yā hitāyāhitāya ca

samā pravartate dṛṣṭiḥ kṛtsnā hy eṣā dayā smṛtā.[1]

"The entire outlook characterized by treating all beings alike whether the good ones or the bad ones is termed *dayā*."

The *Bhaviṣyapurāṇa* defines it as

apare bandhuvarge vā mitre dveṣṭari vā sadā

ātmavad vartanaṁ yat syāt sā dayā parikīrtitā.[2]

"To treat a stranger or a relative, or friend or foe, as one's own self is what is called *dayā*."

Apte's *Sanskrit-English Dictionary* reproduces a stanza–it does not give its source–which defines *dayā* as

yatnād api parakleśaṁ hartuṁ yā hṛdi jāyate

icchā bhūmisutaśreṣṭha sā dayā parikīrtitā

"O Brahmin, the urge in mind that arises to put an end to some one else's affliction, even at strain, is called *dayā*."

Simply put all these definitions together point to *dayā* being an urge entailing conscious effort to remove or mitigate the suffering of others.

Daya has, as it emerges from the above, a wider perspective including in its compass all beings, *sarvabhūta*, all creatures and not just a segment of them, say the human beings. Interestingly, it is only the word *dayā* which goes with the expression *sarvabhūta* and none of its so-called synonyms. One does not come across generally the words *sarvabhūtakṛpā* or *sarvabhūtakaruṇā*. The only expression comes to one's notice is *sarvabhutānukampā*.

It is an exercise worth undertaking to divine the fine shade/s or nuances in the meaning of the Sanskrit words for pity and mercy or compassion listed above, not easy in the absence of the full details about their use in literature. But it is worth its while even within the constraints of the paucity of information on that score which only a work like the Sanskrit Dictionary on Historical Principles currently under preparation in the Deccan College, Pune can provide.

We take up now the words for pity, mercy or compassion listed above in the alphabetical order. The first is *anukampā*. Pāṇini uses it in the *sūtra anukampāyām*[3] which enjoins the suffix *kan* in the sense of *anukampā* which the commentary *Bālamanoramā* explains as *dayā*, the sense the commentary *Tattvabodhinī* also seems to imply by just quoting the Amara line *kṛpādayānukampā syāt*. But from the example *putraka*, it appears to yield the sense of endearment, *putraka* meaning dear son. This sense comes when the being is an object of loving or tender care. From this it is not difficult to slide into the sense 'to take pity,' *e.g.*, *kathaṁ Brāhmaṇī mām anukampate*,[4] 'Oh! the Brahmin lady is taking pity on me,' or *kim ujjihānajīvitāṁ mām*

anukampase,'[5] why are you taking pity on me who has lost (hope) of life.' The idea of pity is there but the usage points to that pity which a senior/superior/mightier extends to the junior, inferior/weaker. Even when the divine cow Nandinī uses the word for herself : *bhaktyā gurau mayy anukampayā ca*[6] she seems to accord Dilīpa, the king who is out to exchange himself for her, a higher position. The same is the shade in the expression *bhūtānukampā tava cet* when Dilīpa makes the proposal for exchange.

Much less in use in literature than *anugraha* and *kṛpā* is the word *anukrośa*. Kālidāsa uses it in two of his works, the *Abhijñānaśākuntala* and the *Meghadūta*, in the former three times and in the latter once. Of the three times it occurs once when Duṣyanta stricken with love finds fault with Kāmadeva for having no consideration for him, *bhagavan Kāmadeva na te mayy anukrośaḥ*,[7] the second time when Priyaṁvadā entreats the fiery sage Durvāsas who had inflicted the curse on Śakuntala that Duṣyanata in whose thoughts she was immersed would forget her, that the dereliction in not receiving him (the sage) with due courtesies being the first one; *kim api punaḥ sānukrośaḥ kṛtaḥ*[8], 'was softened a bit'. *Anukrośa* Apte explains as 'disposed to show pity or sympathy'. He draws attention to the similarity of derivation of the two words *anukrośa* and sympathy. *Anukrośa* comes from $\sqrt{\text{krus}}$ 'to cry' with *anu*, 'along with' while the latter is derived from 'sym', 'together' and pathos, 'suffering, feeling'. The third time the word occurs in the work is when Śakuntalā ascribes all her misfor-

dīnānugrahabhāvaḥ kāruṇyam.[20] The *karuṇā* resides in the Almighty, the All-powerful who is nothing but compassion (the Buddhists call it in their context *Mahākaruṇā*). Lord Rāma is said to be *karuṇāmaya* : *kākutsthaṁ karuṇāmayaṁ guṇanidhiṁ viprapriyam.* Death is cruel. So it is described *karuṇāvimukha,* averse to compassion : *karuṇāvimukhena mṛtyunā,*[21] in Aja's lament at the loss of Indumatī. In the *Svapnavāsavadatta* of Bhāsa when Vāsavadattā is called upon to weave a garland for the would-be-co-wife Padmāvatī, she feels bad and out comes the remark from her : *aho akaruṇāḥ khalv īśvarāḥ*[22] Oh gods are unkind (merciless). In the *Meghadūta* the Yakṣa tells the cloud that the sorry state of affairs of his consort would make the latter shed tears in the form of fresh water, for, says he, every one with tender heart (lit. wet heart) is of the nature of being compassionate : *prāyaḥ sarvo bhavati karuṇāvṛttir ārdrāntarātmā.*[23] In the *Naiṣadha* the golden swan finding himself in the clutches of the king bemoans his lot, he being the support of his old mother and the young wife just delivered. How come, says he, O, (cruel) fate, kindness/compassion not hold you back (from oppressing him) : *aho vidhe tvāṁ karuṇā ruṇaddhi no.*[24]

Kindness, sympathy, tender-heartedness, pity, mercy and compassion are values that go with humaneness. It would be a cruel world, if these were absent. They are elevating and ennobling. Like all qualities they are in-born in some and are to be cultivated through the study of the scriptures and the contact with the good people in others. There may still be some who may just not be moved by the miseries and cries for help of

others. They have hearts of steel. It is they who permit themselves the most heinous of crimes. They are perverts, *ātatāyins* and *nṛśaṁsas* and deserve to be put to death without a second thought : *ātatāyinam āyāntaṁ hanyād evāvicārayan.*[25] It is fortunate for society that they form only a small segment of it. Not to be *ātatāyin* or *nṛśaṁsa* is the supreme virtue, *ānṛśaṁsyaṁ paro dharmaḥ.*[26]

Sanskrit literature is full of statements where the qualities of sympathy, pity, mercy, compassion are extolled in superlative terms. It has cases where people, holy or ordinary, high and mighty and lowly and miserable have staked their all to provide succour to others. The classic cases are those of sage Vālmīki and the Uśīnara king Śibi. The *Rāmāyaṇa* of the former is a saga of the melting of his heart at the pathetic sight of the female of the Krauñca couple crying piteously, *rurāva karuṇāṁ giram,*[27] at the slaying of her companion when in love sport by a hunter. The ghastly scene of the male bird struggling on the earth bathed in blood so moved the sage, *ṛṣes tasya kāruṇyaṁ samapadyata,*[28] that he inflicted a curse on him never to have any respect : *mā niṣāda pratiṣṭaṁ tvam agamaḥ.*[29] It was his grief for the bird that had turned *into śloka* : *śokaḥ ślokatvam āgataḥ.*[30]

When the news of the public outcry about Rāma taking delight in the company of Sītā who had been forcibly carried in his lap by Rāvaṇa and lodged in the Aśokavanikā under the demon's guard which could also mean condoning similar things on the part of their womenfolk by the citizens reached Rāma's ears, he ordered her banishment to another country, the other

dīnānugrahabhāvaḥ kāruṇyam.[20] The *karuṇā* resides in the Almighty, the All-powerful who is nothing but compassion (the Buddhists call it in their context *Mahākaruṇā*). Lord Rāma is said to be *karuṇāmaya* : *kākutsthaṁ karuṇāmayaṁ guṇanidhiṁ viprapriyam.* Death is cruel. So it is described *karuṇāvimukha,* averse to compassion : *karuṇāvimukhena mṛtyunā,*[21] in Aja's lament at the loss of Indumatī. In the *Svapnavāsavadatta* of Bhāsa when Vāsavadattā is called upon to weave a garland for the would-be-co-wife Padmāvatī, she feels bad and out comes the remark from her : *aho akaruṇāḥ khalv īśvarāḥ*[22] Oh gods are unkind (merciless). In the *Meghadūta* the Yakṣa tells the cloud that the sorry state of affairs of his consort would make the latter shed tears in the form of fresh water, for, says he, every one with tender heart (lit. wet heart) is of the nature of being compassionate : *prāyaḥ sarvo bhavati karuṇāvṛttir ārdrāntarātmā.*[23] In the *Naiṣadha* the golden swan finding himself in the clutches of the king bemoans his lot, he being the support of his old mother and the young wife just delivered. How come, says he, O, (cruel) fate, kindness/compassion not hold you back (from oppressing him) : *aho vidhe tvāṁ karuṇā ruṇaddhi no.*[24]

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side of the river Gaṅgā at a lonely place in the vicinity of the hermitage of the sage Vālmīki who when told by the sons of the Ṛṣis of their having spotted a beautiful lady crying loudly under the weight of her grief, went out to her, consoled her, brought her along and placed her in the care of the hermit ladies living in the periphery of his hermitage introducing her as the daughter-in-law of his friend Daśaratha and the daughter of Janaka who had been banished, though without sin, *apāpā*, and therefore deserving of special attention. It was in his Āśrama that Sītā delivered the twins. It was he who arranged for special protection, *rakṣā*, for them from ghosts and goblins, the elder one with the upper part of the grass, *kuśa* and the younger one with the lower part, *lava*, of the same duly sanctified by the *mantras* which he handed over to the elderly lady ascetics which they had to rub against the person of the infants who thenceforth derived their names from them (the upper and lower parts of the grass, *kuśa* and *lava*) (*Rāmāyaṇa*, Uttarakāṇḍa, 49.66). After he had composed his *Rāmāyaṇa* he taught the same to the twins when grown up a little. Its recitation by them he put to test in the company of the sages and seers in the forest who felt ecstatic and showered the young ones with all the meagre gifts they had with them. It is only after the efficacy of the recitation had been tested, he asked the young ones to proceed to Ayodhyā along with him where the Aśvamedha sacrifice arranged by Rāma was in progress and render the same in between the recess for the rituals to enable Rāma to listen to it in fulfilment of his ultimate objective of uniting Sītā with Rāma which he wanted to accomplish by twofold means of turning

public opinion in favour of Sītā's acceptability; the total likeness of the physical appearance of the young ones with their father would be the proof positive of Sītā's purity and the other of Sītā being alive and could be restored to her consort if everything went well, the objective in which he eminently succeeded, the objective which had propelled him to go all the way to Ayodhyā, even though uninvited, in spite of the fact– and this really is strange–that all high and the mighty of the sages of the time had received the invitation and were participating in the sacrifice and camp in the vicinity of the city under his own arrangements. On coming to know from the young reciters about the composer of the poem, Rāma invited him and requested him to bring Sītā along which he did to make Sītā, as per Rāma's wish, pledge her purity in the assembly of the sages and the other important people. Presenting Sītā before Rāma and the congregation Vālmīki declares : "I have practised penance for thousands of years. May I not reap the fruit of it if Sītā is touched by sin." :

bahuvṛṣasasahasrāṇi tapaścaryā mayā kṛtā
nopāśnīyāṁ phalaṁ tasyā duṣṭeyaṁ yadi Maithilī.[31]

This is the sage Vālmīki who stakes his *tapasyā* of thousands of years for the sake of a hapless lady. This is an instance of compassion unmatched in the annals of the world.

An equally unmatched incident as recorded in the *Mahābhārata*[32] is that of King Śibi who to save the life of a pigeon taking refuge with him (for fear of a hawk chasing it) refused to part with it and offered his own self as food for the

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latter.

A vast corpus of literature going by the name of Purāṇas furnishes a number of instances wherein the qualities of kindness and compassion are depicted. Since it is not possible to take up all those instances here for constraints of space, we shall have to confine ourselves to only a few, the more telling ones among them. The *Viṣṇupurāṇa*[33] records the story of the sage Aurva who saved the life of an unborn son of King Vāhu who could not be delivered because of a poisonous substance administered to his mother by a co-wife out of jealousy. The delivery postponed indefinitely, the king died seven years after it was due, his wife still carrying and not able to deliver, resolved to end her life, a resolve that she was made to give up by the sage. Not only that. The sage helped her deliver the child and brought it up under his care with the prescience that he would do good to society. The sage for his efforts was motivated solely by consideration of welfare of humanity. He had no personal axe to grind in all this.

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* As goes the story Indra and Agni out to test the righteousness of King Śibi known for it took the form of a hawk and pigeon respectively, the latter going into the thigh of the king to save itself from the former who was chasing it. The king assured the pigeon protection and would not let it go inspite of the cogent pleadings of the hawk. The hawk would not accept any other creature as a substitute either. It relented only to the extent of accepting the flesh of the king equal in weight of the pigeon which the king sliced off from his body and put on the scale. The pigeon wieghing heavier every time he did it, he with all the flesh sliced off climbed on to the scale himself winning thereby undying fame for his compassion in rescuing a creature come to him for refuge and an instant place in heaven.

The *Brahmapurāṇa*[34] recounts a very touching story of a pigeon couple of which one, the female one was caught by a hunter. As chance would have it, the hunter came to spend the night under the same tree where the male of the couple was perching. In the night the female one responded to the chirping of her mate and declined the former's proposal to free her. She found no fault with the hunter for, according to her (the female pigeon) he was just following his profession. She even went a step further. She suggested to her mate that he take the hunter as guest and offer him food which he did by offering himself as food to him leaving him stunned and speechless.

The same Purāṇa in its 92nd Chapter recounts the story of a woman Mahī who getting widowed at a very young age went out to have an experience of the world leaving her young son in the care of the sage Gālava. In the course of her wanderings she turned into a prostitute. The son when coming of age also went out for the same purpose. As chance would have it, the mother and the son run into each other and for a while the son takes the mother as his mistress. When they come to know over a period of time the identity of each other, they want to end their life from which they are prevented by compassionate Gālava who leads them to right path.

Of the nine virtues with which the Buddha is credited one is that of compassionate conduct : *itipi so bhagavā arcām sammasambaddho vijjacaraṇasampanno sugato lakavidu anuttaro purisadammasarathi sattha devamanussānam buddho bhagaveti*, "the exalted one, the accomplished destroyer of defilements, a Buddha perfected by himself, complete in clear

knowledge and compassionate conduct, supremely good in presence and destiny, the knower of the world, the incomparable master of men to be tamed, the teacher of celestials and men, the awakener and the Lord by skilful means apportioning Dhammas." As a matter of fact, it forms the cornerstone of the Buddhist ethos, Lord Buddha himself epitomizing it in his life which is clearly borne out by the following incident.

A certain Bhikkhu was once sick with dysentery and lay fouled in his own urine and excrement. As the Buddha was going the round of the lodgings with disciple Ānanda he came to that Bhikkhu's dwelling. When he saw him lying in the condition he was, he went up to him and said : "What is your sickness Bhikkhu?" It is dysentery, Blessed One, said he. "But Bhikkhu, have you no attendant?" "No, Blessed One." "Why other Bhikkhus do not look after you?" "I am no one to the Bhikkhus, Lord; that is why they do not look after me." Ānanda brought some water. Both poured it and washed the Bhikkhu, raised him up and put him on the bed.

With this as the occasion and this as the reason the Buddha summoned the Bhikkhus and asked them : "Bhikkhus, is there a Bhikkhu sick in a certain dwelling?" "There is, Blessed One." "What is that Bhikkhus's illness?" "He has dysentery, Lord." Has he anyone to look after him. If he has a preceptor, he (the preceptor) as long as he lives, look after him till his recovery. His teacher, if he has one, do likewise. Or his pupil or one who has the preceptor or one who has the same teacher. If he has none of these, the community should look after him. Not to do so is an offence of wrong doing, for compassion

must be voluntary and eternal."

The following Dhamma talk is also very important to show the importance and role of compassion in Buddhism.

A certain youth who lived in Savatthi heard a teacher preach Dhamma. He yielded his heart to the Sanona, went forth to homelessness and after full admission to the Sangha became known as the Thera Tissa. As time wore on, an eruption broke out on his body. At first it appeared in the form of boils no bigger than mustard seeds but as the disease progressed they assumed successively the size of kidney, beans, chick-peas, jujube stones, emblyio myrobalans and then beael fruit. Finally they burst open and his whole body got covered with open sores winning him the nickname Thera Putigatta (rottenbodied) Tissa. After a time his bones began to disintegrate and no one was willing to take care of him. His under and upper robes which were stained with dry blood, looked like fibrous pan-cakes. His fellow residents, unable to care for him, cast him out and he lay on the ground without anyone to look after him. The Buddha took pity on him. He knew that Bhikkhu Tissa was ripe for Arhantship. He thought to himself: "That Bhikkhu has been abandoned by his associates; at the present time he has no other refuge than me." Accordingly he went to the hall where fire was kept. He washed the boils of the Bhikkhu, placed him on the brazier, waited in the fire room for the water to boil and when he knew that it was hot, went and took hold of the end of the bed where the Bhikkhu was lying. He caused a measure to be brought and sprinkled hot water. Then he went and taking his stand near Tissa, moistened his body with hot

water and rubbed and bathed it and then changed the robes. With his heart full of compassion he took his stand at the pillow and said to the Bhikkhu : "Bhikkhu, consciousness will depart from you, your body will become of no use." At the conclusion of his teaching Thera Putigatta Tissa attained Arhantship and passed to Nibbāna. The Buddha himself performed his funeral rites over the body and taking the relics, caused a shrine to be erected.

The following address of Lord Buddha to the Bhikkhus tellingly underscores the importance that he attached to compassion : "O, Bhikkhus, the secure, safe path leading to joy has been opened by me, the treacherous path blocked off. Bhikkhus, whatever may be done out of compassion by a teacher seeking the welfare of his disciples, that has been done by me out of compassion for you. So be compassionate and full of love."

The compassion of Lord Buddha extended just for the well being of society has justly been termed *Mahākaruṇā*, 'The Great Compassion.' This is not peculiar to the Buddha alone. It characterizes the Supreme Entity in the entire Indian tradition. The Lord is *Karuṇāvaruṇālaya*, the ocean of Karuṇā. It is through His *Karuṇā* that he runs the entire show of the universe.

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THE CONCEPT AND PRACTICE OF *PAROPAKĀRA, TITIKṢĀ (KṢAMĀ), UDYOGA (UDYAMA), AUDĀRYA, SANTOṢA, ŚAUCA* AND *ŚILA* IN SANSKRIT LITERTURE

Indian tradition lays great emphasis on cultivating certain values like *paropakāra*, doing good to others, *titikṣā*, tolerance, *kṣamā*, forgiveness, *dama*, self-control, *indriyanigraha*, control over the senses, *dhṛti* or *dhairya*, fortitude, *śauca*, purity, *mṛdubhāṣitā* softness in speech etc. which could form ingredients of *śīla*, an umbrella for all the good qualities.

In the human existence the best situation is when one has not to live only for oneself, that being just an animal instinct. A human being has to outgrow himself to reach out to others, to be of any service to them, to help them, should they require it, to provide succour to them. That is as it should be. That will elevate him mentally and spiritually by opening him up to the wider world which he would then come to look upon as an extension of himself. That will impart to him the feeling that his begetting the birth is of some worth : *parahitasampādanaṁ ca janmaphalam*[1] . This is the real goodness that comes to the fore among the noble people of their own volition, *santaḥ svayaṁ parahite vihitābhiyogāḥ*[2] . That is the barometer of goodness. It is that which does not make good people insolent in prosperity : *anuddhatāḥ satpuruṣāḥ samṛddhibhiḥ*. To do good to others becomes the very part of their being: *svabhāva evaiṣa paropakāriṇāṁ*[3].

If a person is learned, his learning should be such as to be useful to others : *sā vaiduṣī phalaṁ yasyā na paropakṛteḥ param*[4] . This is easily noticeable in the way of the scientific and technological discoveries. The medical researchers who toil day in and day out in inventing new drugs to fight diseases or to relieve distress or pain or make these bearable are not doing so just for themselves. They toil for the good of humanity at large. That is true of scientists as well who devote long hours in their laboratories to make life of the common people more comfortable and easy.

The prerequisite to doing good to others is to be good to oneself, to be a *satpuruṣa*. It is the *satpuruṣas* who engage themselves in doing good to others. It is about them that it is said that their prosperity is for the good of others. It is they who are compared with rivers which drink not their own waters or the trees which eat not their fruits or the clouds which partake not themselves the grains (though germinating them) :

pibanti nadyaḥ svayam eva nāmbhaḥ
khādanti na svādu phalāni vṛkṣāḥ
payodharāḥ sasyam adanti naiva
paropakārāya satāṁ vibhūtayaḥ[5]

One has therefore to cultivate the quality of goodness to do good to others which leads to merit that every sane person desires to acquire. The gist of the vast Purāṇic literature, comprising eighteen works, as declares an old stanza in the most unequivocal terms, is to do good to others and not to cause trouble to them: *paropakāraḥ puṇyāya pāpāya parapīḍanam.*

For doing good to others, *paropakāra*, a strong will is

necessary. A chicken-hearted man would think of his own self first. To move out of oneself needs determination, a resolute will. It is possible that in the course of doing good to others one may court trouble to oneself, even risk one's own life and invite penury and misery to oneself. Still, if one persists in one's efforts, that betokens one's strong will. Maybe, while doing good or thinking of doing good one may have to dissuade the other person from following a course which may be harmful to him. For this one may have to invite his harsh words . One is however not to be deterred by them :

dhīraḥ sadā racayate hi paropakāraṁ
vākyaṁ kaṭhoram api tasya dayārdragarbham
nirvāntatoyanivahair jaladair visṛṣṭā-
varṣopalā dadhati śītalavārigarbham[6]

"A strong-minded person always does good to others. Even his harsh words have in them an element of kindness. The hailstones showered by clouds after they have emptied themselves of their mass of water have in them cool water."

Paropakāra is a high watermark of a cultured person. He will go out of his way to share his wealth with the poor and the needy and thus win for himself undying fame. Kālidāsa refers to this very fact when he says that the loss of digits by the moon which is sucked digit by digit by gods is more appealing than the gaining of them : *paryāyapītasya surair himāṁśoḥ kalākṣayaḥ ślāghyataro hi vṛddheḥ*[7]. The really good people never even speak of the good turn they do to others; lest it were to cause hurt to their self-esteem. They would prefer to keep themselves in the background and just do good. An inter-

esting anecdote connected with the well-known savant Ishvarchandra Vidyasagar bears reproduction here. He was in the habit of going for morning walk. One morning he noticed a person crying at his sad fate. Vidyasagar approached him and asked him as to what was wrong with him. The man brushed him aside with the remark that he better mind his own business and leave him alone. When the latter persisted, the man was more insolent. 'Do you have means to help me', said he. 'Leave me to my fate', said he. With Vidyasagar still persisting, he told him that he had mortgaged his house for the marriage of his daughter and with him unable to pay the mortgage amount his house would have to be auctioned as per the court orders . The next day the auctioneer came at the appointed hour and told him to his surprise that his house would no longer require auction, somebody having paid the mortgage amount for him already, leaving him to infer that it must have been the same person who had accosted him the previous morning and with him he had been so harsh.

This is *paropakāra* in the true sense of the term.

The other human value which goes well with *paropakāra* is *titikṣā*, forbearance, endurance. It could be defined as withstanding the bad turn or harm done to one by another person. This requires a strong moral fibre. Normally the tendency is to pay back in the same coin. Not to do so is the highest virtue. It is this which can bring about many a gain that otherwise would be impossible. No means would equal it to achieve them: *na titikṣāsamam asti sādhanam.* If a person strong enough otherwise to retaliate or to inflict punishment

were not to go in for it, he would earn the goodwill of the opponent and win him over. Rightly has it been said: *titikṣākavacenaikaḥ sarvaṁ jayati saṁvṛtaḥ*[8], "protected by the armour of endurance one conquers everything". By everything what is meant is no just the hostility of the other party but also his own unease born of the desire for revenge and the agony caused by the opponent. It is a measure of one who is in a position to repay the insults, the abuses and the mental and physical injury. An instance here would bear it out. Once the wife of the well-known Maharashtrian saint Tukaram got angry with him and hit him with a sugar cane. The saint picked up the cane, broke it into two, gave one part of it to his wife and began to chew the other part himself much to the shame of the former who felt utmost remorse for her thoughtless action. Mahatma Gandhi, even though fighting the British rule never even for a moment bore ill-will for the British people. *Titikṣā* or endurance is a quality which leads in tandem with qualities like *śama*, tranquillity, *dama*, self-control, *uparati*, withdrawal, etc. to the realization of the self: *tasmād evaṁvic chānto dānta uparatas titikṣuḥ samahrti bhūtvā' tmany evātmānaṁ paśyati.*

Kṣamā is another name for *titikṣā*. The *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* proclaims it to be (the greatest of the) gifts. According to it it is the truth, it is sacrifice, it is a man's true glory, it is *dharma*, the whole world is sustained by it :

kṣamā dānaṁ kṣamā satyaṁ kṣamā yajñaś ca putrikāḥ
kṣamā yaśaḥ kṣamā dharmaḥ kṣamayādhiṣṭhitaṁ jagat[9]

Nothing, no curse, no exercise, no fire, no poison, missiles or weapons are sharper than *kṣamā*[10]

He is said to be a real man who controls his rising anger with forbearance like a snake a worn out slough,[11] .

The real knowledge consists in *kṣamā*. It is the ignorant, the unwise who would fall a prey to intolerance which is the source of all troubles, all strifes and dissentions.

If only one were to give a chance to it, it would be a more pleasant world to live in. It is this which lends sheen to knowledge. It provides the healing touch to frayed tempers. The knowledge needs to be tempered with it. That will be its ornament :

narasyābharaṇaṁ rūpaṁ rūpasyābharaṇaṁ guṇaḥ
guṇasyābharaṇaṁ jñānaṁ jñānasyābharaṇaṁ kṣamā[12]

"A handsome figure is the ornament of a man, the ornament of a handsome figure is quality, the ornament of a quality is knowledge and the ornament of knowledge is forbearance".

Knowledge needs will power to back it up. Even when realizing that one should control one's emotions, one may not actually be able to do so. A determined effort is a *sine qua non* for this.

As a matter of fact, effort or initiative is a desideratum for all human activities. Man has been so designed by nature that he cannot sit idle even for a moment, not doing anything : *na hi kaścit kṣanam api jātu tiṣṭhaty akarmakṛt*. He is forced to indulge in some activity or the other compulsively as it were : *kāryate hy avaśaḥ karma sarvaḥ prakṛtijair guṇaiḥ*[13] .

This spontaneous/involuntary activity like eating drinking, talking, walking, sleeping, is one thing and the conscious

activity to engage productively in some thing or the other is another thing. It is this activity which is extolled throughout Sanskrit literature. *Udyoga, udyama or abhiyoga* as it is called there brings prosperity to a person who engages himself in it : *udyoginaṁ puruṣasiṁham upaiti lakṣmīḥ*[14]. It is through this only that one achieves everything and not by mere pious wishes: *udyamena hi sidhyanti kāryāṇi na manorathaiḥ*. The deer do not gallop into the mouth of a lion by themselves when it is asleep : *nahi suptasya siṁhasya praviśanti mukhe mṛgaḥ*[15]

The emphasis on effort, initiative, application goes as far back as the Vedic literature which proclaims in no uncertain terms that the deities do not make friends with a man who does not toil: *na ṛte śrāntasya sakhyāya devāḥ*[16] . It is not untrue that the gods protect one who works hard: *na mṛśā śrāntaṁ yad avanti devāḥ*[17]. Prosperity does not come to one who does not work hard.

It is not effort casually made once that would lead to success. It is the persistence in it, the *nairantarya*, that matters. It is with this that even the most difficult things are accomplished. Even a rock gets thinner with the repeated fall of water :

durlabhāny api sidhyanti kāryāṇi prodyamena hi
śilā 'pi tanutāṁ yāti prapātenārṇaso muhuḥ[18]

This is best illustrated by an old anecdote. As it goes, a Brahmin of Bengal of the name of Bopadeva invited the wrath of his teacher because of his slow wit. He would not follow the lesson even when it was repeated to him a number of times. The cussed teacher threw him out of the school much to his

chagrin. While coming out of it he noticed a well and some round potholes near it. On enquiry from the village belles drawing water from the well, he came to know that these were there because of the repeated placement of the pitchers on particular spots. This set him a thinking. "If this could happen to the inert matter, could it not happen to him?" This proved to be the turning point in his life. He repaired back to the school and assiduously pursued the lessons till they got soaked into his mind. With this he won back the confidence of the teacher and rose to be one of the greatest of the scholars of his time. Constant application is, therefore, the key to success.

Aśvaghoṣa from whom a stanza had been quoted above follows up that stanza with another one where he reproduces another mundane phenomenon in illustration of this. A person, says he, who does not stop in the midst of an act of rubbing fire sticks alone gets fire, the same is the case with the spiritual attainment (*siddhi*) :

araṇīmanthane jātu yo virantuṁ na ceṣṭate
sa eva labhate vahnim evaṁ siddher api sthitiḥ[19]

Persistence in an activity can bring success even to one who may otherwise be weak in constitution. As per an old *subhāṣita* even an ant, if on the move, though slow, covers thousands of *yojanas* (a measure of distance in old times) while a *garuḍa*, if sitting idle, does not move even a step forward:

yojanānāṁ sahasrāṇi yāti gacchan pipīlikā
agacchan vainateyo 'pi padam ekaṁ na gacchati[20]

In no case is one to give up initiative, even if success were not to attend one's efforts. "That is my fate" kind of ap-

proach is no good or "whatever has to come has to come anyway", "what fate has ordained for one, that one has to bear" kind of thinking would get a person nowhere. Fate or no fate, one should continue with one's efforts. One can never get oil from sesame seeds without exertion :

na daivam api sañcintya tyajed udyogam ātmanaḥ
anudyogena tailāni tilebhyo nāptum arhati[21]

To a person who exerts repair all fortunes impulsively as do frogs to a pond and birds to a full lake :

nipānam iva maṇḍūkāḥ saraḥ pūrṇam ivāṇḍajāḥ
sodyogaṁ naram āyānti vivaśāḥ sarvasampadaḥ[22]

So a person should take to exertion like a friend and negligence as an enemy for it leads to great achievement :

udyamo mitravad grāhyaḥ pramādaṁ śatruvat tyajet
udyamena parā siddhiḥ .....[23]

Not only should one exert, one should exert quickly (without loss of time) in matters that one has to accomplish :

kāryeṣv avaśyakāryeṣu siddhaye kṣiprakāritā[24]

Intimately connected with the quality of *paropakāra* is the quality of *audārya*, magnanimity, liberality which forms the bedrock to it. Without it one cannot really get ready to provide help to others. It is that which makes a person look upon the whole earth as one family, *vasudhaiva kuṭumbakam*[25]

It is only when a person accepts others as one's own can he help them. Limiting oneself to one's own self or to one's near and dear one limits one's vision. With limited vision *paropakāra* is simply impossible. It is only when one opens up that one can pray for all that they cross all hurdles, that they

have all their desires fulfilled, that they get happiness everywhere :

saravas taratu durgāṇi sarvo bhadrāṇi paśyatu
sarvaḥ kāmān avāpnotu sarvaḥ sarvatra nandatu[26]

With *audārya* also goes *santoṣa*, contentment. With this one loses greed. One is satisfied with what one has. With that comes peace of mind which simply is invaluable :

sadā santuṣṭamanasaḥ sarvāḥ sukhamayā diśaḥ
śarkarākaṇṭakādibhyo yatropānatpadaṁ śivam[27]

"For a person who has contentment in mind all the quarters give happiness all the time like the comfort to the one well protected with shoes from gravel and thorns".

A person could be very rich, still he could be very mean, not sharing his wealth with others, not even spending on himself. The real richness lies in the magnanimity of the mind which simply is invaluable :

āḍhyatvaṁ nāma tad idaṁ
citt audāryaṁ pragīyate
naḍhyatvani dhanavattvaṁ yad
akiñcanasamaṁ matam[28]

Santoṣa, contentment is said to be the greatest treasure, the only one at that, of man, *paraṁ nidhānam*. There could be, as indeed there are, other treasures as well but they are all transitory, *kṣayāntāḥ*, as they are described. They come and go but certainly not *santoṣa*, contentment. It reflects the mental health. Once in it, one does not hanker after material things which in any case cannot provide real happiness which can come about only through tran-

quility going with contentment. Rightly says the *Padmapurāṇa* :

santoṣāmṛtatṛptānāṁ yat sukhaṁ śāntacetasām
kutas tad dhanalubdhānām itaś cetaś ca dhāvatām[29]

"How can those who run about in greed of wealth have that happiness that those tranquil in mind satiated with the nectar of contentment have ?"

One of the five *niyamas*, the duties prescribed for a man (which are not obligatory, a point that distinguishes them from the other types of duties, the *yamas), santoṣa* means not to crave for more than that which can be managed within the means available, *sannihitasādhanād adhikasyānupāditsā*. It is a mental state which could be just inborn in a man, *sahaja* or could be acquired through association with the good people. In no case it means loss of desires; it only signifies limiting them to means available, to derive the same comfort and ease even within one's limited resources as one would have derived in prolific ones. It is this that would not make a person eye with jealousy the rich life-style of the neighbour and lose his equanimity. A wise man has rightly said that if fate is to bestow crown, it bestows it in the form of contentment. One who suffers from craving even hundreds of miles is no distance while for a contented person even an object come to hand means nothing:

na yojanaśataṁ dūraṁ bādhyamānasya tṛṣṇayā
santuṣṭasya karaprāpte' py arthe bhavati nādaraḥ[30]

Whatever is just needed to maintain themselves (lit. by which the stomach could be filled) is what the people can call their own. One who takes more than that to be so is a thief

deserving of punishment :

yāvad bhriyeta jaṭharaṁ tāvat svatvaṁ hi dehināṁ
adhikaṁ yo 'bhimanyeta sa steno daṇḍam arhati[31]

Nature has provided enough for everybody on the earth. One who appropriates to oneself a larger share of its resources, deprives others of the same to that extent which is at the source of all deprivation, misery and distress. It is advisable for such a person to share the excess resources with his less fortunate brethren to bring back to them which is rightfully theirs. Such a person will have in his mind unlimited happiness, *saukhyam atulam*, no botheration, *na duḥkham*, no mental torture, *tapaḥ*, no enemy, *na ca ripuḥ*[32]

The present discussion on *santoṣa* could well be closed with its definition, a rare one indeed in Sanskrit literature which the *Jābālayoga* furnishes in the following words :

yadṛcchālābhato nityaṁ prītir yā jāyate nṛṇām
tat santoṣaṁ viduḥ prājnāḥ parijñānaikatatparāḥ[33]

"The pleasure that people derive from what comes to them as a matter of course, the wise who are solely devoted to the pursuit of knowledge know as *santoṣa*".

One of the other *niyamas* along with *santoṣa* of the ten of them enumerated by Atri :

śaucaṁ ijyā tapo dānaṁ svādhyāyopasthanigrahaḥ
vratamaunopāvasaṁ ca snānaṁ ca niyamā daśa[34]

is *śauca*, purity.

It has been defined as avoiding a prohibited article of food, associating with the non-defamed ones and sticking to right conduct.

abhakṣyaparihāraś ca saṁsargaś cāpy aninditaiḥ
ācāre ca vyavasthānaṁ śaucam etat prakīrtitam[35]

According to the *Cāṇakyarājanītiśāstra* it is of five types : compassion for all beings; control over the senses; truthfulness; mental purity and, the fifth one, purification by water :

sarvabhūtadayā śaucaṁ śaucam indriyanigrahaḥ
satyaṁ śaucaṁ manaḥ śaucaṁ jalaśuddhis tu pañcamam[36]

In more compact form it is divided into three categories: physical, mental and intellectual :

svadehamalanirmokṣo mṛjjalābhyāṁ mahāmune
ahaṁ śuddham iti jñānaṁ śaucam āhur manīṣiṇaḥ[37]

"According to the wise, O great sage! The removal of the dirt of the body by the earth and the water is external purification. Cogitation is the mental purification while (the feeling that) 'I am pure' is intellectual purification."

Of these the knowledge purification stands at the apex.

It is this which should be assiduously sought. External purification is all right but it has to be followed up by internal one:

bāhyaśaucena yuktaḥ saṅs tathā cābhyantaraṁ caret[38]

"After purifying oneself externally (by bath etc.) one should also purify oneself internally."

As is clear from the above, in the order of purification, the physical purification comes first. That is the *sine qua non* of any kind of purification, however lower in gradation it may be. Indian tradition lays great store by bath, the primary source of physical purification, for it is this which can make a person feel fresh after the night's sleep or the afternoon slumber or

after the day's hard toil, particularly so in a tropical country like India where for most part of the year it is hot and humid with all the perspiration and body odours. A shower or a swim in a pool or pond or a river takes away the sloth . One feels thereby more active and alert. That is why it is said that " one may ignore a thousand things but bath one must have", (*śataṁ vihāya bhoktavyam) sahasraṁ snānam ācaret*. With the root meaning connected with bath the words connected with rivers or their banks or their currents though ostensibly used in different meanings such as *snātaka, abhiṣeka, pārāvāra, pārīṇa, anukūla, pratikūla, anūpa, pratīpa*, etc. point to the act of bathing and the need of water for the same and the physical purity thereby.

With freshness achieved by physical purity the mental purity is just a step further. With mental purity the intellect would shine out and the true realization of oneself attained. The ancient texts emphasize that one has to continue with the follow up steps and not stop at physical purity only which howsoever good and desirable is not the be end and all end of life. One has to go on to the final step of knowledge purification. Says the *Jābālayoga* :

jñānaśaucaṁ parityajya bāhye yo ramate naraḥ
sa mūḍhaḥ kāñcanaṁ tyaktvā loṣṭhaṁ gṛhṇāti Suvrata[39]

"O Suvrata, one who is given to (lit. takes delight) in external purification in preference to the knowledge purification, that ignorant one, is just picking up a lump of earth in preference to gold."

If a person is impure, is prone to evil thoughts, is sub-

ject to baser instincts, his physical purity has no meaning. He may have washed his body clean but his mind may continue to be unclean even if following rigorously the regimen of hygiene. That is what the *Liṅgapurāṇa* purports to say when it declares " Do the best of the Brahmins, get clean by regular (lit. always) bath in water? So one should always carry out, as per the procedure, internal cleansing :

sadāvagāhya salile viśuddhāḥ kiṁ dvijottamāḥ
tasmād ābhyantaraṁ śaucaṁ sadā kāryaṁ vidhānataḥ[40]

The internal cleansing has been explained as

saumukhyād abhisamprītir arthināṁ darśane sadā
satkṛtiś cānasūyā ca tadā śuddhir iti smṛtā[41]

"To always receive supplicants with pleasant face on seeing them, to honour them and not to have ill-will for them". The *Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra* explains as to which things are purified by what

adbhiḥ śudhyanti gātrāṇi buddhir jñānena śudhyati
ahiṁsayā ca bhūtātmā manaḥ satyena śudhyati[42]

"The limbs are purified by water, the intellect by knowledge, the self by non-violence (as per the *Manusmṛti* by knowledge and austerities : *vidyātapobhyāṁ bhūtātmā)* and the mind by truth."

The purification automatically goes with certain objects like people who follow the conduct which is ideally expected of them. Underground water, a woman devoted to her husband, a king solicitous of (the welfare) of his subjects and a contented Brahmin are pure :

śuci bhūmigataṁ toyaṁ śucir nārī pativratā

śuciḥkṣemaṅkaro rājā santoṣī Brāhmaṇaḥ śuciḥ[43]

There is much talk of corruption these days. To stay clean in financial matters was very well recognized by ancient thinkers of India. That man is pure who is pure in financial matters, yo *'rthe śuciḥ sa śuciḥ*.[44]

All these qualities and others add up to what *śīla* is. It is an enigmatic term which is all-comprehensive as should be clear from the following stanza of the *Nītiśataka* (No. 80) of *Bhartṛhari*:

aiśvaryasya vibhūṣaṇaṁ sujanatā śauryasya vāksaṁyamo
jñānasyopaśamaḥ śrutasya vinayo vittasya pātre vyayaḥ
akrodhas tapasaḥ kṣamā prabhavitur dharmasya nirvyājatā
sarveṣām api sarvakāraṇam idaṁ śīlam paraṁ bhūṣaṇam[45]

"Goodness is the ornament of prosperity, restraint in speech of that of bravery, tranquillity of that of knowledge, humility of that of learning, investment in a deserving case of that of money, absence of anger of that of austerities, forgiveness of that of the mighty, absence of pretension of that of *dharma*, *śīla*, the all round source of all these, is the best of the ornaments".

This very point is reinforced when it is said that there is no ornament like *śīla*, *vibhūṣaṇaṁ śīlasamaṁ na cānyat*[46]

It is for this reason that it is praised sky high all through Indian tradition. One who lives while observing it lives in reality : *śīlasya pālanaṁ kurvan yo jīvati sa jīvati*[47] It is like a guide in a dreary forest , *śīlaṁ hi śaraṇaṁ saumya kāntāra iva deśikaḥ*[48]. *Śīla* removes stigma of the family as also the dirt *(mala)* of sin. It adds to merit, spreads fame, bends the deities,

removes the host of obstacles and leads to the attainment of heaven as also salvation with ease."

Śīla has lack of hostility towards all beings in word, mind and action, compassion and charity :

adrohaṁ sarvabhūteṣu karmaṇā manasā girā
anugrahaś ca dānaṁ ca śīlam etat praśasyate[49]

One who does not have it, knowledge, learning, austerities, riches, the spreading fame—all are like the bath of an elephant:

vidyā śrutaṁ tapo vā 'py aiśvaryaṁ vā yaśaḥprakarṣo vā
śīlarahitasya puṁso dviradasnānopamaṁ bhavati[50]

At this point it is pertinent to pause and think as to what this *śīla* which is spoken of in superlative terms means. The *Amarakoṣa* explains it at two places. At one place it interprets it as pure conduct, *śucau tu carite śīlam*[51] while at another as nature or *good conduct, śīlaṁ svabhāve sadvṛtte*[52] *(III.3.202).* It however appears that śīla is much more than just good conduct. It is an innate goodness in man, a reservoir of good qualities that imparts him rare strength of character. It is not easy to define it nor is it easy to translate it. It is that sublimity that is felt to exist but which is difficult to describe. Right or good conduct is a poor rendering of it, not able to capture its spirit that goes far beyond it. It is this that makes a person easily approachable, *abhigamya* and impossible of being overawed, *adhṛṣya*. It is inner strength born of a myriad qualities that propels a person to follow the right path and shun the wrong one. It is this strength that imparts a rare equanimity to a person which makes him impervious to the totally contrary situations

in life and facing them with the same evenness. The great remain the same when favoured by fortune or visited by adversity : *sampattau ca vipattau ca mahatām ekarūpatā* like the sun which is red when it rises and red when it sets, *udayan savitā raktaḥ rakta evāstam eti ca*. When told first that he was to be anointed a king and then that he was to be exiled, Rāma's face showed no expression, *nālakṣayata Rāmasya kañcid ākāram ānane*[53] (ākāra = expression). There was no perturbation in his mind as he was preparing to leave for the forest forsaking (the rule over) the earth as if he was different from all others :

na vanaṁ gantukāmasya tyajataś ca vasundharām
sarvalokātigasyeva lakṣyate cittavikriyā[54]

It is this quality which makes a person look out of the ordinary. Where the devils would not dare to tread. the angels would walk easily.

In the *Mahābhārata* once *Yudhiṣṭhira* asked *Bhīṣma* as to why it is that while describing *dharma* everybody first talks of *Śīla* and that he should explain it to him as to what it is. The latter told the former that the same question *Duryodhana* had put to his father *Dhṛtarāṣṭra* when he (*Duryodhana*) was seething with jealousy at your excessive prosperity in former days at Indraprastha. *Dhṛtarāṣṭra* had told him that it is possible to conquer all the worlds with *śīla*. He had underlined its importance in the following words :

śīlena hi trayo lokāḥ śakyā jetuṁ na saṁśayaḥ
nahi kiñcid asādhyaṁ vai loke śīlavatāṁ bhavet[55]

"There is no doubt that with *śīla* (all) the three worlds

are possible of conquest. For people possessed of *śīla* there is nothing impossible of achievement in this world."

Proceeding further he recounts to him the story of Prahlāda and Indra. By means of *śīla* Prahlada wrested the kingdom of heaven from Indra which made him repair to Bṛhaspati which gave him knowledge to bring peace to his distraught mind. When Indra wanted more of it, Bṛhaspati asked him to go to Śukrācārya, who when approached, asked Prahlāda to pass on his *śīla* to Indra which he did. One by one a quality after quality like truth, *satya*, might/lustre, *tejas*, strength, *bala* came out of the body of Prahlāda and entered into that of Indra. With *śīla* gone, the royal fortune forsook him. On being asked as to why she was doing so, she said :

śīlena hi trayo lokās tvayā dharmajña nirjitāḥ
tad vijñāya surendreṇa tava śīlaṁ hṛtaṁ prabho[56]

"O ye, the knower of dharma, thou had conquered the three worlds through *śīla*. Having come to know of it, O Lord, Indra has wrested your *śīla* from thee."

It is no wonder then that *śīla* is proclaimed as the best of the ornaments, *paraṁ bhūṣaṇam*. Leave aside the worldly ornaments which are prone to decay and disappearance unlike *śīla* which is constant, even the ornaments in the form of qualities severally would not stand up before *śīla*, that being an aggregate of them and more.

Śīla is not unoften referred to by the term *vṛtta*. Overwhelming importance is attached to its observance. It is said that one should keep it up assiduously while wealth (*vitta*, a word phonetically close to *vṛtta* but miles apart in sense) comes

and goes. One does not lose anything if one loses wealth, *vitta*, but with the loss of character (that is the nearest equivalent of it, everything is lost :

vṛttaṁ yatnena saṁrakṣyaṁ vittam āyāti yāti ca
akṣīṇo vittataḥ kṣīṇo vṛttatas tu hato hataḥ [57]

As said earlier, it is not possible to give a single line definition of *śīla*. *Śīla* is like *śīla* just as we say sky is like sky or ocean is like ocean, *gaganaṁ gaganākāraṁ sāgaraḥ sāgaropamaḥ*. It is a great fortune to come together with a person endowed with *śīla*. Rightly does a Subhāṣita say :

kiṁ madhunā kim vidhunā
kiṁ sudhayā kim ca vasudhayā 'khilayā yadi
hṛdayahāricaritaḥ Puruṣaḥ
punar eti nayanayor ayanam

"What has one to do with honey, the moon, the nectar as also with the whole earth, if a person with captivating character and conduct comes to view (lit. comes within the range of eyes).

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24.*Kumarāsaṁbhava*, 10.25.

25.*Hitopadeśa*, Mitralābha, 70.

26. *Vikramorvaśīya*, V.25.

27. *Śrīmadbhāgavatapurāṇa*, 7.15.7.

28. *Nītikalpataru*, 74.8.

29.*Padmapurāṇa*, 5.19.260.

30.*Hitopadeśa*, 150.

31. *Śrīmadbhāgavatapurāṇa*, 8.14.8.

32. *Manodūta*, 87.

33. *Jābālayoga*, 2.5.

34. *Atri Saṁhita*, 49

35.*Bhaviṣyapurāṇa*, 1.2.160.

36. 3.42.

37. *Jābālayoga*, 1.22.
38. *Liṅgapurāṇa*, 8.32.
39. *Jābālayoga 1.22.*
40. *Liṅgapurāṇa 8.35.*
41. *Skandapurāṇa*, Mā.Kau. *4.6.*
42. *Baudhāyana Dhramasūtra 1.5.1.*
43. *Cāṇakyanīti, 2.37.*
44. *Manusmṛti, 5.106.*
45. *Nītiśataka 80*
46. *Pañcatantra*, 2.155.
47. *Padmapurāṇa*, 46.95.
48. *Saundarananda*, 34.47.
49. *Mahābhārata*, Śāntiparva, *124.66.*
50. *Nītidviṣaṣṭikā, 33.*
51. *Amarkoṣa I.6.26.*
52. ibid., 3.3.202.
53. *Rāmāyaṇa*, 2.19.36.
54. ibid., 2.19.36.
55. Śantiparva, 124.15.
56. ibid., 124.61.
57. *Mahābhārata, Udyagaparva*, 66.30. Also see Vikramarkacarita, 17